# 'TWIXT HAMMER AND ANVIL.

A Novel.

BY

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'MISS DOROTHY'S CHARGE,' 'MR. VAUGHAN'S HEIR,'
'ST. SIMON'S NIECE,' &c.

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# 'TWIXT HAMMER AND ANVIL.

## CHAPTER I.

### TAKING THE BULL BY THE HORNS.

One cannot be liked by all the world; and, popular as Effie de Marsan could usually make herself, there were people who did not fancy her. So far as the neighbourhood of Vieux-ville was concerned, she possessed one positive enemy, and that, unfortunately, chanced to be old Madame de Chantal, the widowed mother of handsome Arthur.

Had Effie been gifted with prescience of the future, she would undoubtedly have done her best, in the beginning of their acquaintance, to gain the lady's friendship. They had met in Paris the previous winter, and had known each other some little time before Effie encountered the son, that young gentleman having gone to Vienna for a few months as *attaché* to the

French embassy; and being unaware that Madame possessed a treasure so interesting, Effie had taken no pains to secure her good will. She could be coolly impertinent and calmly disdainful; and, as ill luck would have it, she exercised her talents upon Madame de Chantal, and, worse than all, laughed at her almost in the old lady's hearing.

When Arthur returned and attached himself to her little court, of course Effie changed her whole line of conduct toward the mother; but it was too late. They kept up a semblance of polite intercourse, for, to a certain extent, Madame de Chantal was a prudent person, and would not run the risk of increasing Arthur's infatuation by any open rupture with Effie. She was *dévote*, even *bigote;* but in her character of Frenchwoman she understood that a young man will commit follies, and perhaps thought it, on the whole, safer that he should dangle after a married flirt who lived in "society"—at least, she could keep herself better informed as to the real state of affairs—than allow himself to be attracted beyond the circle of the parental orbit by some wandering star, whose eccentric convolutions swept through a lower sphere.

But it was a grief to her when she found that

spring and a return to the country would not take her son beyond Effie's influence. De Marsan's family was Norman, though he had never lived in the province since his early youth. Madame de Chantal thought it very unkind of Providence to remove Léon's last surviving relative at this juncture, or at least that it should have inspired that gentleman with the idea of bequeathing a moderate fortune and a small estate to his nephew, in close proximity to the decayed château where she usually lived the year round, and where Arthur must live too. For a while she indulged in the hope that De Marsan had become too much attached to a nomadic life to relinquish it, or that Effie would rebel against being immured in a dull country neighbourhood. But no such relief came; and on the day when Effie herself sweetly told Madame that she was delighted to find her future home lay within easy visiting reach of Madame's own residence, the religious old woman felt that she absolutely hated the speaker. And now that all these weeks at Vieuxville had passed, and matters gone on from bad to worse in Madame's opinion, she had reached a point of exasperation beyond which patience could no longer support her.

Except the title of Vicomte and the barren

acres still belonging to the dismal ancestral château, Arthur had inherited little from his father. Much as she admired her son, Madame had sense enough to perceive that he would never acquire any considerable reputation in diplomacy, for which career she had designed him; so his only hope of restoring the family splendour lay in a rich marriage. Now this desirable opportunity offered itself in the person of the daughter of a certain Monsieur Flandin, who had lately established himself in the neighbourhood—somewhat too *roturier* in the matter of birth to be pleasant to Madame's aristocratic tastes; but the fortune so vast that such scruples must be put aside.

Madame and her intimate friends, the Hautevilles and all the other magnates, had cordially welcomed Monsieur Flandin and his heiress among them, with the express intention of securing the young lady's millions for Arthur de Chantal. When the father gained an inkling of these plans, he proved delightedly acquiescent, and Mademoiselle Mathilde herself—a quiet, unassuming girl, moderately pretty and moderately endowed as to mental gifts—was acquiescent too, as became a properly conducted French maiden.

But there had been a hitch; the business

had advanced very slowly, and Arthur was the person in fault, to all appearance. But Madame de Chantal went beyond appearance, put her finger on the real culprit, believed, and at last whispered among her intimates, that Effie de Marsan was the cause of her son's lack of eagerness to snatch the golden prize. Old Madame cursed a good deal over the delay; she thought she was praying, but so many of our prayers are curses that we may as well use the rightful word. Arthur was a good son, decently attentive to matters of religion, neither vicious nor "fast," though restrained from such proclivities by the natural indolence of his character rather than by fixed moral principle. This was the first time in his life he had ever really opposed his mother; in the beginning he had seemed to consent, had only appeared inclined to make no haste, but during the last fortnight, since the old lady had taken a stand, and insisted that negotiations should be commenced without further delay, he had positively rebelled, and there had been trouble and disquiet in the house of the De Chantals. There were no stormy scenes; Arthur was mild in disposition, and usually took refuge in silence, and the Vicomtesse never warred in a tempestuous fashion. She nagged; and having

slightly lost her head now, she nagged morning, noon, and night, till it was no wonder the youth preferred any resting-place to the shelter of his ancestral roof.

Madame de Chantal believed herself behaving with circumspection, her priest had told her that was the only wise course; but she gossipped about the matter among her friends, took each person's advice in turn, "talked over" her son's deliquencies—and he knew she did, so I must say it spoke well for his character that he could keep decently respectful and affectionate—until now there were few people, with the exception of Monsieur Flandin and his daughter, who were not in full possession of every detail, and ready to take sides one way or the other.

Finally Madame, a few days after the *fête* at the Sugar Works, was seized with an inspiration—positively her own too—and she proceeded to act upon it without consulting any human being—an almost unparalleled instance in her life. She was a tiny woman, wonderfully well preserved; so appallingly dainty in her dress that one felt she had been born an old maid, and would remain one to the end of her existence, even though she might have espoused as many husbands as the Samaritan

lady with such marked marrying proclivities, and borne as many children as the wife of an itinerant Wesleyan preacher. She was a little mousy-looking body, who talked in a low voice, had an infinitesimal spinster-cough, and seemed so mild and gentle that it was always an astonishment when one came to understand her character to find that, fairly roused, she could be as obstinate as a donkey—a female donkey — say very biting, venomous things, and do very bold ones, always in an innocent fashion, as if not exactly comprehending the full daring of her acts.

This morning, on which Madame proceeded to carry out the scheme she had evolved during the watches of the previous night, Effie de Marsan and her husband were sitting together in his studio.

The new picture had made fair progress, though rather spasmodically worked at, owing to the interruptions which must teaze any artist when he employs amateur models. To-day Léon was busy with his wife's likeness, and the odd pair were enjoying a *tête-à-tête* as peaceful as if no storm had ever darkened their domestic horizon. Effie was in one of her charming moods; no other man near; not caring about any other just at the moment,

and Léon, weary from the fierce passion which had desolated his soul for days, glad to respond to her amiability, and actually able to forget for the time, as few men could have done, the clouds which lay so heavily across the past and future.

They were interrupted by the entrance of a servant, with the announcement that Madame de Chantal had arrived.

"I must go and see her," Effie said. "It is too bad you should be disturbed just when you are in the vein."

"Pardon, Madame," observed the domestic, "the Vicomtesse desired me to ask if she might not come into the studio."

"What can we do?" cried Effie, in English. "If you refuse she will never forgive me—us."

"Let her come," said Léon.

"But you did not mean anybody to see the picture till it was finished? She knows you are at work on it, and to cover it up will make her more angry than not letting her in."

"Never mind," he answered; "I dare say she will not stop long."

The servant was bidden show the visitor into the *atelier*, and presently little Madame

entered, so preposterously dainty in her dress, and so delightfully sweet and amiable, that, from the first instant, Effie scented mischief, and wished heartily she had not allowed her to come within Léon's reach.

"I have to beg a thousand pardons," said Madame, as she pecked at Effie's cheek like a mouse at a bit of cheese, and then turned to offer her hand, with winning cordiality, to De Marsan. "It was positively rude of me to force my way in; but when they told me you were both here, I knew Monsieur was at work, and I could not disturb him by taking away his model; and I was so anxious to see the picture."

Then she pecked at Effie's other cheek, and gave her tiny cough, and Effie felt more and more convinced she intended mischief; her acute powers of discernment had long before given her a clearer estimate of the lady's character than most people possessed.

"We are always so glad to see you," Effie said.

"And you are a wicked woman not to give us the opportunity oftener," added Léon, partly because he rather liked Madame—she had petted him when a child, and his childhood had been too sad for him not to remember

kindness—partly because, with his quick perceptions, he discovered that Effie was sorry she had permitted the guest to enter, and he enjoyed the idea of a skirmish between the two.

"You are both only too good to say such things," returned Madame. "You know I do not go out much; her own fireside is the best place for an old woman."

"You may talk about being that ten years hence," said Léon; "why you look fresher and younger every day."

"Almost sixty-five, Monsieur Léon, and you know it as well as I do," said Madame, playfully.

Even in the midst of her vexation and her wonderment as to what malice the visitor meant to perpetrate, Effie took time to think that it was the first time in her life she had ever heard a French woman admit her age, though she might be a great-grandmother and walk on crutches.

"It does not seem possible, dear Madame!" cried she.

"Ah, my dear, so many things are possible which do not seem so, and this is one of them," replied the old lady, laughingly, as she patted Effie's shoulder—to Effie's mind the

caressing gesture merely accentuated the hidden meaning of the words. "But I shall go away unless you keep on with your work," she added, to De Marsan. "Only may I have one peep at the picture—just one? Arthur told me that nobody was to see it at present; but I promise to be discreet and hold my tongue."

"Of course you must look at it," said Léon, "and criticize it too."

"I hope Monsieur Arthur is quite well," Effie hastened to say, taking advantage of the mother's introduction of his name. She knew her coolness would irritate Madame, and besides, it was a dogma in her long creed of self-delusions that her masculine friendships were entirely without disguise, and agreeable to any relative of the objects of her amity.

"Thanks, thanks, the dear child is very well. I will tell you about him after a little; but I must look at the picture first."

The retort was neatly managed; Effie appreciated it; the only thing which irritated her was to perceive, by the amused expression of Léon's face, that he appreciated it also. Madame apparently was the only member of the trio who did not understand she had framed her answer in a way which might seem

a reproof to a lady accused by ill-natured people of a flirtation with the young gentleman in question. She sat down in the artist's chair, and remained for a few seconds silently examining the painting.

"It is wonderful!" she exclaimed at length. "What colouring!—what drawing! De Marsan, you will excel yourself in this."

"Do you honestly like it?" he asked, aware that the old lady was no mean judge of art.

"Indeed I do! How ever did you dare bring in those different yellows? But the effect is marvellous. Let me see—ah, I can already distinguish the outlines of Arthur's face, though it is only sketched in."

"Yes; I am leaving him to the last."

"An admirable likeness you are making of Madame Pemberton. What a charming woman, by the way! So frank and easy, yet so modest and reserved; so free from any taint of coquetry—that prevailing sin of our age."

"One of the pleasantest women I ever met," said Léon.

"But I'll not have her made out perfection," laughed Effie; "a perfect woman is a monstrosity! Honour goes to church—she is a philanthropist, and all the rest of it, but, thank Heaven! she has a spice of wickedness to leaven

the lump—a liking for men's society in her case: people must own some sort of pet sin, dear Madame."

But Madame was again too much absorbed in the picture to hear. Presently she looked up, and gave her little cough; it was capable of expressing many shades of meaning, that cough of Madame's—this time it was a kind of wondering interrogatory.

"What is this?—I am puzzled!" she observed, glancing at Léon, then back at the painting, then studying Effie's face for a second. "Arthur said your wife was one of the models—now that is not she—and yet!—Do not speak, let me look at it again." Once more she began to examine the features of the woman who stood in the foreground, holding her rich draperies to her bosom with one hand, the other pointing to the man lying dead on the sands, her eyes fastened upon the kneeling woman with an awful glare, while a smile of wicked triumph curved her lips.

The character assigned to Effie in the painting was not flattering, though Léon had idealized the countenance into positive beauty. Effie's face was sweet and sad; the portrait had an appallingly wicked expression—yet it resembled her. Effie rather liked this; liked

to wonder if her nature really held such capabilities as those features suggested. She had begged Léon, when he first made the sketch, to paint a picture, and when he mentioned the difficulty of finding a model to suit his idea of the woman evidently gloating over the death of her victim and the despair of her rival, had assured him that she was quite actress enough to call up the requisite expression, and she had succeeded.

Madame studied the picture—studied Effie's face—put her head on one side, shook it, nodded it. Finally the puzzled expression left her countenance, and she cried out,—

"Why, it is Madame de Marsan—it really is! It is not in the least like her, yet it is her living image. I cannot understand it! How ever did you manage to put that look on her face and yet make it resemble her?"

Léon, remembering how much rage, jealousy, and wretchedness had gone into the work with every stroke of his brush, felt for an instant that he would like to annihilate the whole composition. He could not bear to think it was like Effie, though he felt the portrait's truth. As for the model herself, she was not in the least sorry she had persuaded her husband to

paint her in this guise. Hereafter, when she wanted a new subject for reproach, she could tell him that, even in his paintings, he liked to misrepresent and outrage her, as he did in his conversation and actions. Still she was vexed with Madame de Chantal's criticisms; she knew they were intended to express that this picture had given her a new phase of Effie's nature, and that she considered it a glimpse of the real wickedness there was in her, not an expression called up to suit the character as an actress might school her features when playing a tragedy queen.

"It is wonderful—wonderful!" repeated the old lady. "Madame de Marsan, how did you ever manage to look like that? Why, I feel as if I was gazing at some evil spirit who had stolen your bodily semblance."

"I am quite willing to look as wicked as Medea herself, and run the risk of my friends thinking me so, provided I can be of the least service to my husband in his art," returned Effie, with a proud humility, which rather put Madame at a disadvantage.

"Of course, of course!" cried she, heartily. "I know how devoted you are to his career. Ah, Monsieur de Marsan, every artist is not so fortunate! You have sympathy, counsel, aid,

in your own home; many a man has to toil on uncheered by those blessings."

It was Léon's turn to feel that he should like slightly to strangle the little old woman, who sat there uttering her barbed platitudes with such apparent unconsciousness of their power to wound.

"I am fortunate," he said, quietly. "Well, I am glad you like the picture."

"A marvel," exclaimed the old lady, who was seldom roused into enthusiasm. "But I must not usurp your chair any longer. If it will not disturb you, I should like to stay a little longer."

"We should not let you go if you tried," replied Effie.

"Then go on with your work, Monsieur," pleaded the Vicomtesse. "Do let me see you pose, dear Madame."

But here Léon came to the rescue.

"I have done all I can on the face for one morning. I must let it dry," he said, as he placed an easy chair for the guest.

Effie seated herself with her back to the light, and took from a table a bit of the dainty lace-work ladies indulge in nowadays, and in which she was an expert. Madame fell to admiring it, and the two ladies discussed pat-

terns and stitches for a few moments, while De Marsan established himself again at his easel, and began to work on his foreground.

I think it would have puzzled him to tell what odd mingling of sensations caused him, by a few hasty touches of his practised brush, to change the outlined face of the dead man into the countenance of a grinning idiot—but he did it. Rage with Madame de Chantal for daring to read a lesson to his wife, wrath toward Effie that she should have placed herself in a position to make such lesson possible. What feeling lay under these he would probably have found it difficult to analyze, and I have no desire just here to do so. Suddenly, with a single stroke of the brush, he obliterated the face altogether, with a remorseful pang, as if he had done young Arthur a positive wrong in some matter where no blame could attach to him.

Madame de Chantal extricated herself from the network of Effie's lace—in the meshes whereof that astute young woman would gladly have held her till the visit ended—and opened her batteries; still speaking in her mild little voice, and giving her prefatory cough—apologetic, yet decided, at this juncture.

"I came to-day for a purely selfish reason,"

said she, smiling at husband and wife in turn. "I have a troublesome conscience, so I cannot avoid admitting the fact."

"Dear Madame, we do not care what brought you; it is pleasure enough to us to have you here," cried Effie, eager to avert the revelations she felt were coming (though she had no idea what they would prove), if only for a few moments, which would be in reality useless, since she could not employ them to any purpose.

"You are kinder to me than I deserve, *ma belle*," returned the old woman. "Yes, sheer selfishness! I want you to assist me in a matter I have greatly at heart. I want you to promise in advance to do so."

"Of course," said Effie.

"Monsieur says nothing," observed Madame, after waiting for an instant.

"My dear lady," replied Léon, giving the last touch of his pencil, which swept young Arthur's face into nothingness; "I never promise anything till I have heard what is expected of me."

He laughed as he spoke, yet there was a certain gravity in his tone which impressed both listeners.

"Good!" said Madame. "My dear friends,

I have come to talk—to bore you by talking about my boy. I told you I should, when you kindly asked after him," she added to Effie, with a sudden flash in her greyish-blue eyes, which she quickly concealed by dropping the lids.

De Marsan smiled covertly, he could not help admiring the way the old woman cut and thrust, although he was angry with her insolence.

"You cannot bore me by talking about Monsieur Arthur," said Effie, sweetly; "because I like him exceedingly, and I am sure my husband will tell you the same for himself."

"As much as it is in my nature to like boys, I like Arthur," added De Marsan, composedly, as he mixed some fresh colours on his palette.

"In short, you are his friends," rejoined Madame. "I know he places the utmost confidence in you"—she was addressing herself solely to Effie—she felt, rather than saw, De Marsan looking at her, not in anger or surprise, simply to prove that he comprehended she meant to include him in the speech, and wished to show that he was listening, and meant to be interested if he could. "Both,"

continued Madame, with a little gasp, impelled by the force of Léon's glance to add the word in spite of herself. (It was Effie's turn to smile, and Madame saw her.) "He is more at your house than anywhere else, even at home," she went on, conscious of a certain sharpness in her voice, yet unable to repress it.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Effie. "You don't mean to say you want us to tell him not to come so much, or want me to—for that unpleasant duty always devolves upon the lady—of course you don't mean that."

"No, no!" cried Madame, beginning to fear that she had exulted too soon at her short-lived triumph over her hostess, and to dread having "caught a Tartar" thereby.

"My dear Effie, you are a preposterous goose," observed Léon, in his laziest voice. "The surest proof that Madame likes us as well as I flatter myself Arthur has the good taste to do is, that she says she has come to consult with us about him."

Madame began to fear that she had caught two Tartars instead of one. Effie recovered her serenity, for she perceived that, whatever was coming, she should find an ally in Léon.

"To be sure," said the Vicomtesse, "your mother and I were old friends, Monsieur de Marsan. I believe in friendships being inherited, like other things."

"Madame," said Léon, "I count yours as the pleasantest inheritance into which I have ever entered."

Effie shivered with impatience. This lingering so long on the verge to exchange complimentary words was almost more than her nerves could bear.

"And do tell us about Arthur," cried she. "What has happened?"

The old lady could not resist looking her horror at the omission of Monsieur before her offspring's baptismal appellation, as she answered,—

"What I have to say is no secret—you both know it already. My son's fortune is greatly impaired—the De Chantals of other days were too faithful to their country and their kings for this not to be the case."

"And those bygone Louis of sacred memory were expensive objects of worship," Léon cut in, parenthetically.

"In short, it is necessary that my son should make a good marriage," ended the old lady, brought down so abruptly from her high horse

that she could not conclude her sentence with fitting dignity.

"That means getting a good wife," said Léon.

Effie leaned back in her *fauteuil*, quite content to leave the business in her husband's hands as long as he managed it so well.

"And I believe that I have found him one—an alliance, too, which will bring the wealth he requires, as a return for the position and the title he offers," said Madame. "Of course you both understand to whom I refer?"

"I cannot think, to save my life!" cried Effie.

"You had better tell us at once; it would be awkward if we made a mistake," added Léon, blandly, poising his brush over his palette as if in doubt into which colour he should dip it.

"Not Madame Pemberton?" asked Effie.

"I should be unwilling to see my son marry a woman older than himself: older women, if you will, for a young man's female friends," retorted Madame, putting out her sting. "I alluded to Mademoiselle Flandin. I cannot suppose you have either of you failed to hear something of the matter—I imagined Arthur himself must have spoken of her to you."

"Never to me in that way. I remember his

once saying she would be rather nice if she had any nose," said Léon. "Did he ever talk to you about the proposed business, kitten?"

"I always expect any man, young or old, to talk to me solely of myself," replied Effie, beginning to enjoy the scene in spite of her anger. Léon was behaving so admirably that she could have hugged him, vexed as she was at this advantage Madame's attack in his presence would give him in any future conjugal battle.

"My dear lady," said Madame, "I know you are only speaking in jest. I am too well aware of your admirable qualities as a wife not to be sure of that! But I cannot jest—the matter is too serious—the whole future of my poor boy is involved."

"Do I understand that he is averse to the match?" inquired Léon.

Madame was quick to seize the opening his question offered.

"He was not at first," she said—"he admired Mademoiselle Flandin; but he has had bad advice from some quarter; of that I am sure."

"Not from us, since I assure you he never mentioned her to me except as to that unfortunate want of nose, and my wife tells you he

never talks to her except about herself," said De Marsan, with provoking badinage.

"*Mon Dieu!*" ejaculated Madame; then finding she was near the end of her patience, grasped at her wits, and added,—"Of course neither of you. I said you were his friends—I came to you as such. Ah, dear Madame de Marsan, you are a woman, and can understand a mother's feelings. I appeal to you! Pray assist me, and urge your husband to do so."

"I will do anything that lies in my power," said Effie.

"Thanks, a thousand times!" returned Madame. "I was sure if you could only know how important the matter was—how much Arthur's interests were at stake—you would say that. It was this feeling brought me to you—made me bold to trouble you with these family affairs."

"But if he does not love her?" suggested Effie.

"Is there any reason why he should not?" retorted the old woman, with another flash of her blue-grey eyes.

"He has never told me there was," replied Effie innocently; "I will ask him point blank, if you like."

"There can be none; if so, it would not be

proper either for you or me to know it," said old Madame, drawing herself up still more erect.

"Well, upon my word, I can't see why!" exclaimed Léon.

"My dear De Marsan," said Madame, "it does not answer to inquire too closely into any young man's secrets! My Arthur is the best boy in the world! Mademoiselle Flandin will make him a good wife, and he cannot fail to feel for her that esteem which is the rightful basis of married happiness."

"Only convince him of this, and the business is settled," said Léon.

"I feel sure of doing so now that your sweet wife has promised me the assistance of such friends as you," replied Madame.

"You must excuse me," said De Marsan drily, "in an affair like this, I would neither make nor mar. When my wife and I have promised, in return for your flattering confidence, that we will offer no advice of which you could disapprove, we have done all that is in our power."

"I think you are over-cautious, Léon," said Effie, a little too quickly; "I am quite willing to oblige Madame in every way I can. I will talk with Monsieur Arthur, if she wishes."

Somehow Madame felt that she had given her adversary an advantage by her morning's move, yet she could not help thinking she must have opened the husband's eyes, blind as he appeared.

She added a number of other flattering speeches, and took her departure, if possible more angry with De Marsan than with his wife. As soon as her carriage was safely beyond ear-shot, Léon burst into a fit of laughter.

"I never knew of such a beautiful case of taking the bull by the horns in my life," cried he. "And she got the best of you too, Effie."

"I do not in the least understand," replied she.

"I hope at least it has opened your eyes to one fact," returned he, "and that is that what I have told you is true—people are beginning to gossip about your flirtation with the child, else she would never have dared come here to-day on such an errand."

"It seems to me perfectly natural," said Effie, springing at the loop-hole; "she knows we are Arthur's friends—no man except one as as mad as you would ever be jealous of that boy."

"I only object to your making yourself ridiculous," he replied.

"I shall be able to take care of that, if only you will not render us both so," retorted she.

"I had three minds to turn the old rat out of doors for her impertinence, and to tell you before her that you deserved her lecture."

"For once I am happy to say you kept yourself from absurdity."

"Effie," he said with sudden seriousness, "stop here; promise me that you will."

"I will promise nothing!" she cried. "I will never forgive what you said to me the other day—never."

"It was the most delicious scene!" he went on teazingly. "She hit you hard! I thought I was very good-natured to show myself such an expert bottle-holder to you—you ought to be grateful."

The husband and wife had accompanied their guest to the outer doors, and were still standing on the terrace when Mrs. Pemberton's carriage drove up.

The joke was so good, and De Marsan so eager to annoy Effie, that he could not resist telling the whole story to Honour, and she, never dreaming that her friend would really flirt with Arthur de Chantal, laughed heartily.

Effie could never pardon anything approaching a jest at her own expense; she secretly

vowed that Madame de Chantal should pay for her insolence, and Léon for his ill-advised triumph.

"I shall do as his mother asked me," said she; "I like the boy—I should be glad to see him marry well."

This seemed a natural and praiseworthy sentiment to Honour, but De Marsan understood that she meant to make use of the present position of affairs to suit her own purposes.

He uttered some hurried excuse, and went abruptly away to his studio, afraid that he should be vexed into bitter speeches before Mrs. Pemberton.

## CHAPTER II.

### DE CHANTAL'S FRIEND.

Arthur de Chantal had fallen into the habit of making almost daily visits at De Marsan's house. Occasionally Effie lectured him upon coming too often, but she was good-natured enough to brighten his brief seasons of banishment by letting him know, apparently without intention, in which direction she meant to walk, or what her engagements were to be for those days; so that, either at her own home or elsewhere, twenty-four hours never passed without his seeing her.

He was returning from a ride when he saw his mother's carriage enter the Hermitage gates. She had told him nothing of her intended expedition, and it was so unusual a thing for her voluntarily to go and see Madame de Marsan, that he felt uneasy as to her purpose, certain that it had something to do with him and his misdeeds.

The boy believed himself wildly in love

with Effie de Marsan. He was fascinated certainly, flattered by the idea that a pretty married woman cared for him, still more flattered at the importance given to the matter by his mother and her gossips, and the hints and jests of his male friends in regard to *son affaire avec la belle Anglaise.* His nature was essentially shallow. He was vain and boastful, yet, as I said, neither vicious nor grossly immoral. He had a little fear of Effie, so she found no difficulty whatever in keeping him in order. But, much as he might be in love,—and I suppose his present state of mind as nearly approached that sentiment as he could ever attain,—Master Arthur was too thorough a Frenchman not to have prudent ideas in regard to marriage, and to be fully alive to the attractions of Mademoiselle Flandin's *dot.*

As for the demoiselle herself, he neither liked nor disliked her, and the Gallic creed in regard to matrimony had taught him to consider indifference a proper state of mind wherewith to enter wedlock.

A man was not supposed to love his wife; that was to be reserved for those outside intimacies wherewith everybody must vary the monotony of existence. Had he been on other terms than he was with Madame de Marsan,

he would not have hesitated an hour about encouraging his mother to open negotiations with the Flandins at once. But, unfortunately, he was only Madame's respectful friend, and the obedient slave of her caprices, and, in his youth and inexperience, did not well see the way to being anything else. That the present relations would one day change, he, with the fatuity of his age and nation, thoroughly believed; but he was too inexperienced a Lovelace deliberately to lay plans, and his nature too unimpassioned for him to forget sufficiently his fear of offending Effie to indulge in any outburst.

He rode on to a convenient post of observation upon a wooded hill beyond De Marsan's house, and waited until he saw his mother's old-fashioned chariot drive away. Even when the coast was clear he still hesitated. Effie might have been annoyed by some act of overt hostility on his parent's part, and visit her displeasure upon him.

While he halted in that state of painful indecision, Honour Pemberton's pony-carriage drove up to the door, and he was too agitated and miserable to attempt a visit in the presence of any other guest.

He ranted and raved a good deal to himself

amid the seclusion of the wood. Just then he felt courageous enough to tell his love to Effie, could he have got near her. To elope with her, fight a duel with De Marsan, have the *éclat* of a horrible scandal, would be delightful. But an elopement, however charming in theory, is not easy to carry out—even supposing the lady offers no opposition—when a man has an income so limited that it merely serves to supply his personal wants.

Yet Effie de Marsan and women of her stamp assert that they do no harm by their flirtations, because they never go beyond a certain point. It is not doing harm to fill the mind of a boy with such ideas? It is not doing harm when by similar conduct toward an older man a woman strengthens in his mind a belief in the lightness and frivolity of her sex, till he settles down upon the degrading theory that female virtue is an affair of opportunity or temperament?

Arthur waited till he saw De Marsan set out on his solitary ride, until Madame Pemberton's pony-phaeton rolled out of the gates; then he dashed his horse down the hill, and galloped up to the house as if bound upon an errand of life and death.

He found Effie seated in her favourite room,

looking a little weary and sad, though she received him very kindly.

"If you had come earlier, you would have had the pleasure of meeting your mother—Madame Pemberton also," she said.

"I saw them both," he replied. "I waited on purpose. What did my mother want?"

"To see Monsieur's picture—to tell me how fond she was of me; at least, she said so. She came, in reality, to try and bring more suffering into my life, by making new difficulty between me and my husband," returned Effie.

"What do you mean?" he asked, wonderingly.

"Never mind; it is not worth talking about," sighed she.

"Everything that concerns you is worth talking about," he said.

"I really believe you think so," she answered, with a sad smile. "You are a very kind friend, Arthur; you have been a great comfort to me. I would not, for the world, have let you perceive the misery of my life, but you have been too intimate with us for that to be avoided. Monsieur de Marsan is so violent, so careless of appearances, you could not fail to see!"

Arthur honestly believed him the most horrible brute ever an angel owned for husband.

He heard the two quarrel, and heard Léon say bitter things; he did not understand the veiled insinuations and taunts whereby Effie deliberately provoked De Marsan to such exhibitions of anger, and he considered her a positive martyr.

"I am so sorry for you," he cried, impulsively; "so sorry."

"You must not tell me that," she replied. "I cannot help your knowing the truth, but it must be a secret between you and your own heart. I can trust to your honour and faith—I know you would not betray to another the misery of my home—but you must not speak of it to me. I don't want you even to think about it."

"That I cannot help," he exclaimed; "the idea is with me day and night. I feel sometimes as if I could murder him."

"Hush, hush! you don't know what you are saying, Arthur!"

"I do! I swear I could kill him with pleasure! Then, at least, you would be free—then at least—"

"Arthur!"

"I know you don't care for me; but I am so fond of you—so fond of you!" cried the boy, as he fell on his knees before her, and seized

her hands. He had thought he was bold enough to utter an open declaration of love; but he did not get beyond this.

"You are my good, kind friend," she said; "one is fond of one's friends."

"Ah, but it is more than that—all my soul—"

"Don't be foolish, Arthur, or I shall send you away."

"Oh, you are cruel to me!" he groaned.

He looked up at her, with his beautiful blue eyes misty and dim, his womanish mouth quivering under its slight golden moustache. He was very, very handsome, as he knelt there. While thinking this, a consciousness struck Effie, that, boy as she called him, and told herself she considered him, this flirtation was in some way different from any which had gone before. For the first time in her life it occurred to her that, cold and self-centered as she believed her nature, it might be possible to go too far in the dangerous game of coquetry. There was a certain fascination in the idea—though she would not have believed it; but at least the sudden revelation had the effect of making her change her tactics.

"Get up, Arthur," she said. "Sit here in this chair. I want to talk seriously to you—just as if I were your elder sister."

Effie had vowed in her anger, that she would punish both Madame de Chantal and her husband. Her impulse had been to prevent Arthur's marrying Mademoiselle Flandin. Slight reflection was needed to show her the peril of attempting that. During the past fortnight she had on several occasions noticed an almost imperceptible change of manner toward her in several of the greatest people of the neighbourhood who were Madame de Chantal's special friends. If the plan of the marriage came to nothing through rebellion on the young man's part, the mother would blame her, and wage an open war against her, in which at least a portion of the grandees would range themselves on the old woman's side. She knew there was gossip about her—she liked that. She was called a flirt—this pleased her; but she had no mind to endanger her position in the little world around by any downright cause for scandal.

How much weight the revelations which vaguely struck her as she looked into Arthur de Chantal's handsome face had to do with the sudden resolution she formed, Effie herself could not have told,—would not, if she could. A good many idle dames of what we term society appear to think that an unclean thought

ceases to be unclean if only you give it a decent name. This was the rule upon which Effie acted.

"I want you to listen to me patiently," she went on, even while the reflections I have set down were coursing through her brain.

He had risen at her bidding, and seated himself by her side. He was bitterly disappointed that he dared not go on with the passionate words which rose to his lips, yet he felt a certain sense of relief in having a respite before he tempted his fate. Very young men are apt to be frightened when they tell an unmarried girl they love her; unless quite insane with passion, they often are frightened at venturing to break the ice with a married woman, however inclined to play Lovelace, and however much encouragement they may have received. It is to this reason, rather than to any halo of sanctity about the woman, that married flirts can so often keep a very young man dangling on the verge of betrayal, though these women take it as a proof that they are innocent. It is one of the reasons, when they get the years of experience Effie had gained, why they choose mere youths for their admirers, —these can be usually kept in submission. So long as the ear is not offended by positively

coarse words, the flirt-nature can bear a great deal in the way of revelations which the eyes can make, and still claim to themselves a right to be covered by the voluminous mantle of "flirtation within respectable limits."

So young Arthur, flushing and paling, his great eyes one instant misty, the next aglow with eager light, trembled away from the edge of what Effie, in her wire-drawn distinctions, would have styled impropriety. She could feel the pleasurable sense of power as she watched his agitation; tell herself how capable she was of keeping her slaves in order, and feel bitter and resentful toward her husband because his bluntly expressed theories condemned an interesting poetical scene like the present as severely as what Effie and her ilk call "crime," and punish so severely in a sister-woman. Naturally they only admire her male confederate for his share, und consider that his wickedness renders his society the more enjoyable, either because it may be perilous, or because it is a pleasant idea to think of aiding a man back to the paths of rectitude, though to help one of their own sex under such circumstances would be touching pitch indeed.

"Your mother came here to-day, osten-

sibly to ask a favour of me," continued Effie.

"What?" he asked, rather sulkily; vexed that he had not found courage to play his *rôle* as he intended. "I don't know what she could want, unless to beg you not to hate her outright for being so disagreeable as she is lately."

Effie laughed. "She is sometimes a little trying, I dare say; but she is a good mother after all, and loves you devotedly in her way."

"Her way of showing it is to nag incessantly, and talk me over with the tabbies like old Mademoiselle de Hauteville and the rest of the dragons."

"Don't make such confusion in your comparisons," said Effie; "you turn the aristocratic clique into a perfect menagerie."

"They are worse!" Arthur vowed, indignantly.

"Never mind; we have nothing to do with them at present," returned she, growing grave and sighing as she spoke — a thing she did to perfection. "I am going to do what Madame de Chantal wished—though she was not kind to me—but it will be for your sake, not hers."

"You don't mean to tell me she came here

to talk about Mademoiselle Flandin?" cried Arthur, with the masculine proneness to blunder, mentioning the name himself instead of leaving Effie to be the first to utter it.

"Of Mademoiselle Flandin and your marriage," said she, with less gentleness in broaching the topic than she would have shown had he not erred so unfortunately.

"There is nothing of that kind in question," cried he.

"Arthur, Arthur!"

"My mother got the idea into her head—or her tabbies put it there—I told you so weeks ago."

"And I told you I thought it an admirable plan," interrupted Effie.

"I did not dream of marrying the girl—I will never do it!" he exclaimed, oblivious of the fact that, in order to be truthful, he should have framed his sentence differently, made it read that he had not dreamed of being pushed so rapidly on, and that the "never" was to express merely an indefinite length of time, whose duration would depend upon certain contingencies not in the least connected with the growth of his feelings toward his proposed bride. But he thought he was in earnest! He cared for nothing in the world just now,

except this charming woman beside him, and deemed it very cruel of Fate not to have arranged matters so that he could carry her away on the instant, as young Lochinvar did his bride.

"The match is suitable."

"Never—never! I tell you I will never marry her!"

Effie's face grew more than grave; it was cold and reproving.

"Since you are determined," she said, "it would be useless for me to waste my arguments. There remains only one thing for me to do. I am sorry—we have been good friends—your visits have been a great pleasure to me—but you must not come here any more, Monsieur de Chantal."

He stared at her, dumb and speechless, for a moment, then he said, brokenly (Effie liked to hear the clear, melodious young voice quiver and shake),—

"What have I done? Why are you angry with me?"

"I am not angry," she replied; "I am disappointed in you—that is the hardest thing for women to forgive. You insist upon throwing away your whole future—without even a reason or motive—for a simple caprice. The man

who can do that is weak! Arthur, a woman pardons wickedness, but not weakness."

"I would not allow any other human being to talk to me like that!" he exclaimed, flushing angrily.

"You can go away; then you will not be offended by my plain speaking," she answered; and she made a little gesture of dismissal.

He fell upon his knees again, utterly subdued and wretched, and raved like a young lunatic for a few minutes, though his words were too incoherent for it to be necessary Effie should take in their meaning. Indeed, by this time the youth was so frantic that he had not the slightest idea what he was saying. The only portion of the speech to which Madame de Marsan paid any attention was when he exclaimed, "Don't send me away from you—don't drive me utterly desperate!"

"I have no wish to send you away, Arthur," she answered; "but if you persist in your insane determination I must. I cannot have your mother and the whole neighbourhood in arms against me; I have no one to stand by me—my husband would not do it."

"Do you mean that you want me to marry Mademoiselle Flandin—that you would not care?" he asked.

"I wanted to talk to you about the advisability of such a marriage," she said, ignoring the close of the sentence, as was natural, since she always told Léon that, in what he barbarously styled her coquetries, there was never a word spoken he might not hear. "There is everything in favour of it—from a worldly point of view—and after all, since we live in the world, it is by its light we must regard matters. Nothing to urge against it, except an absurd caprice."

"You call my feeling—"

"An absurd caprice, or disinclination, or whatever name you choose to give it, because Mademoiselle Flandin has a nose more or less pronounced," continued Effie, only noticing his ejaculatory phrase in a way to show that he had interrupted her, though I swear her voice put a period, and not a dash, to the end of the previous sentence.

"I think you are the most heartless woman I ever knew!" he exclaimed.

"Because I will not consider the matter of the lady's nose important?" returned she. "I assure you that my experience has taught me it is of slight consequence. A man might marry for what he called love even, but eighteen months after he would not be able

to tell whether his wife had any nose at all; indeed, she might lose it in his very presence, and he would be none the wiser."

"I did not think you could be cynical," he said, in an injured tone.

"Perhaps, because you never heard me speak so seriously. I have remarked that one is always called a cynic when one tells the truth."

He began to be very angry with himself for letting her push him to the wall in this fashion, and said, quickly,—

"Will you let me tell you the real reason why I cannot marry?"

But the haste with which he spoke — the expression of his face — warned the skilled coquette to check him before he could go further.

"Not until you have allowed me to finish my arguments in favour of the step," she answered; "in favour of this special opportunity. You have called me your friend; was it mere compliment, or were you in earnest? If you meant it, then you must believe that whatever concerns you is of interest to me—you must trust to my judgment—care for my advice—"

"I care for that of no other person in the world," he broke in.

"Then prove it by listening to me. Ah, Arthur, don't deprive me of my one friend!"

"There is no power under heaven which could, if you care for me," he replied.

"You do not love Mademoiselle Flandin," she continued. "My dear Arthur, life has taught me that marriage can be borne without love—but never mind, I did not mean to speak like this. At least you are one of the few men who could be kind and gentle, even if you did not love the woman you married—and a woman contents herself with so little, is so ready to remain blind if her husband will allow her. It is not until he has proved to her in word and act that she is a drag and a burden that a woman in soul separates her life from her husband's. Even though she may not have loved him, she will do all in her power to make their marriage a real union until that comes; then some women only freeze or die—others grow desperate, and in their madness seek—But, oh, Arthur, my friend! the woman who accepts you will never be exposed to such misery or such peril! You are too generous, too good—more than that—too manly to play so mean a part—to be a woman's persecutor—tempter—the ruin either of her heart or her soul."

She spoke with a sadness which touched him deeply. He cried out passionately that he would give the whole world—aye, and the next—to bring her a moment's comfort or peace.

"I am not in question," she said, mournfully, "but I thank you all the same, because it convinces me that you consider me really your friend. Put me aside, Arthur, me and my thwarted, blighted life,—neither is of the least consequence. It is you, your interests, your future, of which I think."

"My future must be what you make it," he replied, almost in a whisper; but they were words Effie could notice, because there was a way of interpreting them which might be employed to advantage.

"Then Heaven help me to use my influence wisely!" she exclaimed with fervour. "You put a great responsibility upon me, Arthur, but I shall not shrink from it. If you meant what you have said — and I believe you did—you will listen to me,—you will follow my advice."

"Yes," he answered, a little doubtfully.

"This marriage arranges your future, makes it possible for you to assert the position which your birth entitles you to. You will not waste

life, as Monsieur de Vieuxville is doing; you have a noble career before you, and you will fill it nobly."

"It will break my heart," he sighed. It was not at all what he wanted to say. He longed to seize this opportunity for advancing his cause with Effie, but he was too inexperienced to know how to go to work, and he lacked the reckless impulsiveness which might have served him in better stead with a woman of her age.

"Dear friend," returned she, "hearts may break, and still life go on very tolerably. Trust a woman's knowledge; trust, above all, that of a woman who speaks from the experience of her own past."

"You cannot love that man!" he exclaimed.

"I did love him," she replied; "I will do my duty to the end. Ah, Arthur, do not talk of me; my life is finished! Give me at least the pleasure of living vicariously in the good fortune of the only man who is—" she paused —"of one of my few friends," she added, after that second's hesitation.

"And what is it you want your friend to do?" he asked, divided between a desire to risk his fate where she was concerned and

a commendable prudence, inspired by the idea that she meant in some way to help him to secure Mademoiselle Flandin's millions, and still keep good his chances in the present quarter.

"To be sensible—to be wise—to put by his fancies, and remember what his position demands of him—to accept the future which destiny offers."

He was a man, and therefore vain; he was a shallow man, and consequently possessed a double allowance of his sex's foible. His vanity was hurt by her apparent willingness to give him up to another woman, though at the same time he thoroughly appreciated the advantages which would accrue from a union with the heiress.

"I was a fool to suppose you would care what became of me!" he said, bitterly. "Well, I do not care either. I will follow your advice."

"That is my sensible Arthur," returned she; "now I recognize you! It is the first time this morning that you have been like yourself. I am selfishly glad too—I need not lose my friend."

He seized adroitly enough upon this opening. "You understand," he said; "that girl is

no more to me than the statuette in the corner yonder! I only enter into this engagement because you tell me it is the sole way in which I can preserve our friendship undisturbed."

"Ah, you will learn to care for her—as men care!" sighed she. "I hope you will! At least be kind to her; she is a good, sweet girl; she will be satisfied with so little. The right feeling will grow. I am content—I shall be, even when I am put aside—when my friendship will appear so slight a thing that you will wonder you ever cared for it."

"That time will never come!" cried he, "and you know it."

She only sighed again.

"Never, never!" he repeated. "You promise, if I do this thing, you will help me to have patience—to bear—to endure?"

"I promise! Come to me when you will, Arthur—ah, I must not call you so any more—"

"And why?"

"It will be interfering with Mademoiselle Mathilde's privileges, and I have no intention of doing that."

He started up from his seat, and paced the room impatiently. At last he came back to her.

"You are very hard to me—very cruel," he

said; "I think that is the way women show their friendship! Never mind. I submit. But I will not lie—not even to please you. The idea of marrying that girl will make me hate her. You have bidden me do it—I shall obey."

"Is it so hard to make a small sacrifice for my friendship?" she asked. "Marriage means a great deal to a woman, but so little to a man! Well, no matter. When you want a friend—when you feel the need of talking as you might to your own soul—you will know where to come."

"I can't do it," he exclaimed; "I cannot! I love you—I love you! I cannot marry her."

She looked at once offended and hurt.

"You forget that you are not speaking to Mademoiselle Mathilde," she said. "I shall say good-bye to you now. I have some visits to make, and must go and dress."

He waxed penitent and remorseful. She forgave him at last, on condition that he was never again to transgress in the same way. She showed him plainly the necessity for this marriage: she drove him wild by her pity; then she consoled him by the promise of her sympathy and friendship.

Finally she sent him off with his head in

such a whirl that he could not have told if he were himself or another, and when her husband came back she met him with the pleasant consciousness that, in spite of his unworthy suspicions, she was a woman to be respected—a wife who fulfilled her duties unerringly, and bore her hard lot without complaint.

That night Arthur de Chantal told his mother he was ready to be an obedient son. She was at liberty to settle preliminaries with Monsieur Flandin whenever she chose. The old lady kissed him and was hugely delighted; all the same she did not forgive Madame de Marsan. In her heart she knew that it was Effie who had brought about this desirable state of mind on Arthur's part, and she hated the pretty woman the more for this proof of power over her boy, though it had been exercised at her own request.

And Effie was content. Arthur might marry, since it was better for him and safer for herself. But she did not mean to forego her vengeance on her husband or Madame de Chantal. Léon should suffer, Madame be kept in constant fear lest Arthur might rebel, and she would assiduously cultivate Mademoiselle Mathilde, and have her for a firm ally in spite of the old mother and her wiles.

## CHAPTER III.

### GRACIEUSE'S ANSWER.

JEAN CHEGARY'S visit to his relatives was reaching its close; his conscience reproached him somewhat for having stayed so long away from his patients, and left so much work upon his partner's hands, though that gentleman good-naturedly wrote him not to hurry back, and to allow no scruples about neglect of duty to disturb his holiday—almost the first Dr. Jean had taken during the ten years he had been established in his profession.

Chegary could feel that he was not completely wasting his time; he had been able to assist Mrs. Pemberton with his advice in the arrangements of her infirmary, and had studied Monsieur Galais's case so closely that he succeeded in finding, what no other physician had done, remedies to alleviate the attacks of pain to which the old gentleman was subject. Dr. Jean's own opinion was that his relative suffered from heart-disease, but he kept this conviction

a secret, though he wondered sometimes if it was not his duty before his departure to give Gracieuse a hint which should prevent the sudden death Jean feared, from finding her totally unprepared. But he could not make up his mind to do it; her father might live for several years yet, and it seemed cruel to burden the girl's youth with so dark a dread.

Gracieuse and Dr. Jean were good friends, as cousins ought to be; still the young man was not exactly satisfied with the footing upon which they stood. There were many things about her which puzzled him, though he had ceased of late to dwell upon them. She was very changeable in her moods toward him; one day frank and confiding, the next fairly avoiding his society or appearing absent and preoccupied; turning so petulant and snappish if he noticed these caprices that he feared almost his society was unpleasant to her. He received plenty of encouragement from the father and Honour Pemberton, but he could not feel so certain as they did that these varying humours were only a proof that her young heart had been touched. Just a bit of girlish waywardness, Madame Pemberton told him, out of her feminine wisdom, arising from the fact that Gracieuse rebelled a little, as girls will, at find-

ing the pleasant trouble which he had brought into her life no longer allowed her to be complete mistress of her soul.

"Gracieuse is imaginative and poetical," Honour said; "the sort of girl to be shy even of her own feelings in such a matter."

Honour had a little weakness for meddling in people's love affairs, and her sympathies were all with Dr. Jean, whom she liked exceedingly, though she was wise enough not to risk annoying Gracieuse by an open show of partisanship. She felt confident that Chegary would ultimately succeed in winning the pretty creature for his wife. She and Monsieur Galais held long confidences upon the subject — she always found leisure to make the old gentleman frequent visits—wherein they settled matters so entirely to their mutual satisfaction, that they could not have a doubt as to Gracieuse's not only accepting an alliance so suitable, but loving the earnest, open-hearted man, who, with all his firmness and practical common sense, had a certain southern impulsiveness and gaiety in his nature which was very charming.

Dr. Jean was going soon now; his twelve days' respite from business had grown almost into three weeks; he was going away, and he

had never yet found the exact opportunity for persuading Gracieuse to tell him in open words if he might take a hope with him. In case he was to obtain this happiness, Dr. Jean's idea would have been to marry speedily and induce Monsieur Galais to live in Bayonne with himself and wife. But Monsieur shook his head at these hints. He was too old to attempt changes; he must spend the remaining term of his life in the pleasant home where he had lived so long; Jean must have patience.

So Dr. Jean understood that, even if Gracieuse should accept him, there could be no marriage at present, and he had refrained from love-making because he deemed it only fair that the girl should have time to learn what her own heart said, and not be forced to think she was made the object of a bargain, as French girls so often must.

But he could not take his departure without coming to a definite understanding with her. That she knew perfectly well his reason for this visit, he was aware; yet she had appeared beautifully ignorant, and managed as even an inexperienced girl can to keep their intercourse upon a footing which left her free and at ease.

He had only two days more left, and latterly

Gracieuse had contrived to be very seldom alone with him. So toward sunset, as he was sitting in the garden arbour with the father and daughter, he boldly asked her to go for a walk. Monsieur Galais had given him the opportunity by saying that he must return indoors on account of his throat, though he would not hear of the two young people losing the loveliest part of the day on his account.

"I think Manette is busy," Gracieuse said, demurely, in answer to Dr. Jean's proposal.

Old Monsieur Galais laughed—ah, I can hear that laugh yet—so genial, so hearty! He was seventy-five years old, yet his laugh had a ring of youth in it that I never heard in the laughter of a youth of five-and-twenty of our generation!

"My dear child," he said, "I think you may venture to go with Jean unattended, even though we are French. We are not dukes and duchesses, and may do pretty much as we like; be American and free, as Madame Pemberton says."

So there was no help for Gracieuse, though she understood perfectly what awaited her, and deferred the departure by every possible subterfuge. She must see her father to the house —no, Dr. Jean was not to give him his arm;

papa was a lazy old fellow, who wished to shirk his duties; his duty was to offer *his* arm to his daughter. Her colour had heightened, her eyes brightened; she said all manner of nonsensical things in a bewitching way, and completely fascinated both her companions.

When they entered, Monsieur Galais insisted upon going to his own room; he said because the one easy chair which deserved the name inhabited that chamber, but in reality he was suffering, and longed to lie down.

After the young people had bidden him *au revoir*, he called Gracieuse back, under the pretence of finding him a certain book. Jean walked on through the hall. As Gracieuse turned to leave him, he laid his hand on her arm, and said softly—ah, the dear, sweet voice, I often think if by God's mercy my soul is ever sufficiently purified to hear that voice in the life beyond this, it will be sweeter in my ears than the songs of the angels!—

"The blessed Virgin protect my child now and always! My dear, though we are what the world calls Papists, I never taught you to pray to anybody but the Father in heaven; all the same, I would not give up my faith that our Christ's mother is especially pitiful over mother-

less girls like you, and asks her Son to love them with a special tenderness."

Gracieuse kissed him, and left the room in silence. Dr. Jean had passed out upon the lawn. The girl paused in the gloom of the corridor, and flung up her arms with a faint moan of anguish. But, after a brief struggle, she moved on and joined her cousin, laughing and gay, having suddenly rushed into her wildest spirits.

"Shall we walk out on the Rouen road?" he asked.

This was the route which led through the wood, toward the château where Honour Pemberton resided. Gracieuse gave an odd smile. For some reason it hurt her to walk in the wood in this company, but she was in a mood to find a strange enjoyment in tormenting herself.

"I like that way best of any," she replied.

So Dr. Jean lighted the everlasting cigarette, without which no southern could any more move than an ancient Roman would have started on a journey without burning incense before his Lares, and the two set out.

They talked upon indifferent subjects, Gracieuse hurrying from one to another with nervous eagerness, and Dr. Jean good-naturedly

following her lead,—of the sunset—of the colouring on the hills. Gracieuse was a little poet and artist at heart, and no beauty escaped her eye, from the tints and forms of the billowing clouds to the commonest flower at their feet and the faintest song of the nestward-bound birds. She had a faculty of seeing wonderful things in the clouds—faces—Grecian girls carrying urns—wandering paths fringed by trees—sea-shores—hosts meeting in battle array—great heaps of shining shields and lances flung down against the blue of the horizon—royal banners of crimson and gold floating out against the paler background. Heaven knows what she did not see, and she playfully scolded Dr. Jean when his more commonplace vision refused to recognize her discoveries.

They walked a goodly distance; away down almost to the entrance of the Vieuxville château, and Jean insisted upon her stopping where a stone bench in the outskirts of the wood made a pleasant resting-place. She began to talk faster and more eagerly than ever, but he interrupted her without remorse. He laid his brown hand softly on hers, looked into her face with his passionate southern eyes aglow, as if the reflections of the gorgeous sunset were imprisoned there, and said, abruptly,—

"It is my turn now, Gracieuse! I love you, dear,—can you bring your heart within my reach? Will you make the dear old father happy by the knowledge that his beloved's future is settled? Will you gratify all our family by letting me tell them that one day I am to bring you among them as my wife?"

It sounded a very bold speech, but it was only that in his excitement he scarcely knew what he said; he was horribly nervous, as men pure in heart and life are apt to be on such occasions. But it might have been better had not his prudence and practical sense caused him to make that mention of what her mother's relatives expected. Gracieuse was not a girl to accept peaceably the disposal of her future by any band of relations, and was more likely to regard their wishes as an impertinence than a proof of kindly interest.

But even this feeling could not account for the pallor which overspread her face—for the anger, changing quickly to fright, that filled her eyes for an instant.

"Dr. Jean!" she exclaimed, in a choked voice.

"I have not vexed you?" demanded he, alarmed and penitent. "I cannot have taken you by surprise; you must have known what

brought me here! Ah, Gracieuse, you must have known that I love you!"

"No, no," she gasped; "I never thought of it! I believed you came on a friendly visit, as any relative might. I—"

She could say no more, and for a little he was silent too. In truth, Dr. Jean was slightly vexed—no, troubled. He hated a lie. The least approach to fib or subterfuge was abhorrent to his uncompromisingly honest nature, and he knew that Gracieuse had not spoken the truth.

"Gracieuse!" he exclaimed, sternly.

"Ah, don't be angry; don't scold me!" she pleaded, putting up her hands, like a frightened child.

Almost before she had uttered the exclamation he was ashamed of his own displeasure. He was hard, commonplace, ridiculous! Surely at a crisis like this, the purest, most truthful girl might be allowed to defend herself against so blunt a statement as he had stumbled upon.

"I beg your pardon," he said, contritely; "I am a blundering idiot. I say just the wrong thing, and in the stupidest way. Ah, dear, believe, do believe, that it is only because my heart is so full I cannot choose my words! But oh, Gracieuse, that heart is

all yours! I'm a rough, plain fellow, but I love you. I can't say it as I ought,—if I felt less I might be able to put it into nicer speech,—but I love you. I have loved you from the day I first saw you, when you were a little child and I a great stupid boy. When I studied, I thought of you; when I became a man and began my life's work, I wanted to do something worthy of your acceptance! Gracieuse,—my love, my heart's darling,—speak to me; tell me that I am not mistaken,—that you will give me a hope,—that I have not lived and dreamed and toiled all these years in vain!"

Like any man ordinarily self-restrained, Dr. Jean had rushed into an intense excitement the moment he gave impulse the rein. His eager speech was checked by the pressure of Gracieuse's hand upon his arm,—a quick, fleeting gesture, as if a startled bird had brushed his sleeve with its wing.

"Don't!" she whispered, "don't! You frighten me. I don't know you when you look so, when you speak like that! Cousin Jean—dear cousin—please, please!"

"I am the greatest brute that ever lived!" cried he. "I know you never can forgive me for having scared you. I don't deserve to be

forgiven. I'd like to beat my brains out against the bench here for my idiocy!"

She began to laugh and cry at the same time.

"No," she said; "you are nothing of the sort. You are the dearest, best fellow that ever lived! But, oh, don't ever talk to me like that again,—don't! If you knew—I mean if—Oh, Jean, let me go home, let me go home!"

She started up to run away.

"Don't go, Gracieuse!" he said, in a calmer voice, his eyes fixed full upon her face, darkened by a sudden return of the painful suspicions which had haunted him during the first days of his visit,—suspicions from which since then he had kept his mind aloof.

She brushed away her tears and smiled upon him, though her mouth still worked tremulously.

"Let me go away by myself," she said; "I'll come back in a few minutes. Dear cousin Jean, don't be angry with me!"

"How could I be, Gracieuse?"

She tried to smile again, but burst into sobs instead. She hurried off to a distance, and for some moments walked up and down among the trees.

Dr. Jean kept his seat, leaned his elbow on

the back of the stone bench, his head upon his hand, and waited, in a state of vague trouble and dread for which he would not willingly have sought a reason, till she should return.

After a while Gracieuse came back, stood behind him, and laid her hand softly upon his shoulder.

"Dear Jean," she said, "I am ashamed to have behaved so like a baby."

The very composure of her voice took away his latest hope. He looked into her pale, set face with a dismal ghost of a smile.

"It is I who have been wrong, Gracieuse," he answered. But his calmness suddenly gave way, and he cried out,—"My God! what does it mean? what does it mean? Can't you care for me, Gracieuse,—can't you care?"

She kept her hand on his shoulder, and the light touch prevented his rising. She turned her face away a little, and, could he have seen it, he might have read there an expression which would have perplexed him more than anything that had gone before. She looked as if, during her brief season of self-communion, she had been recalling some lesson long before learned by rote, and was anxious now to repeat it without making a mistake in a single line, nay, as if there might be danger in

committing the slightest error, were it only that of a word.

"I care for you very much, Jean—you know it," she said; "you are the best, the dearest cousin that ever lived—you are like a brother to me—ah, Jean, don't make me say it—try to understand."

"My God!" he groaned again.

To a man like Jean Chegary, love is a serious matter. For the greater portion of humanity, loves and hates are as numerous as the years of human life. But love to him meant what it does to a few unfortunate mortals—a sentiment in which the object could no more be changed than love itself; he might lose his treasure by death, by estrangement, but the idol once set up in his heart must hold its pedestal for ever.

"Jean—cousin Jean!" she cried.

"I beg your pardon," he answered; "it is cowardly of me to distress you! I ought to understand after what you have said—Oh, Gracieuse," he added, breaking off suddenly, and speaking in an entirely different voice, "it cannot be true. You must care for me a little—at least tolerate me enough to let me ask you to try and like me."

Half-an-hour before, Jean Chegary would not have believed that he should ever beg a

woman to try to like him—but men are asses; I have said this so often that I am tired of making the statement. Having put in this plea, which I think, even in the agitation of the moment, he felt unworthy of his manhood to offer, and still more unworthy of her womanhood to heed, he cried out her name.

"Gracieuse, Gracieuse!" he exclaimed, then was mute.

His very agitation helped her to find the self-control she sorely needed.

"Jean," she said, "you are a ridiculous old fellow, and you have scared me out of my poor little wits—I hope you are properly ashamed."

Had he been a whit less moved—a shade less earnest—he could not have failed to perceive what a miserable pretence this attempt at her ordinary playful manner really was. But there is no animal so blind as a man under the influence of a strong passion or emotion. A bat at noonday would have been clear-sighted compared to Jean Chegary at that moment!

"I am so sorry—" he began, but she checked him remorselessly, each instant gaining more composure from his pitiable confusion.

"You have said that twice already," cried she; "if you repeat it a third time, I shall lose

all faith! When a man protests too much, one is always sure he is telling enormous fibs."

"You do not think I would tell you a lie, Gracieuse?" said this blundering beetle.

"Well," laughed she, "possibly not—or if you did, it would be so clumsily managed that it would be no falsehood whatever. Now, see here, Jean—don't interrupt! Just listen to me! Forget the nonsense you have been talking—let me forget it—above all, if you have been speaking to papa, don't let him fancy there—there is—oh, you know what I mean."

"Yes," said Jean Chegary, sadly, "I know what you mean."

All the same he was so occupied with his own pain that he did not perceive what a poor assumption of her usual manner she attained; that every sentence was delivered like a part of a lesson she had learned by rote in preparation for this present crisis.

"I don't think you know in the least!" cried she, with a coquettish smile; but the smile had not time to fade before she turned her head away to hide the shame and suffering which troubled her face. Poor Jean Chegary only saw the smile, and a new hope sprang up to brighten the sudden darkness which had gathered about him.

"You mean that you want me to leave matters as they are—that we are to be friends—you need more time to think."

"Just that," she interrupted, catching eagerly at his words. Could he have seen her face, he might have understood that she was not influenced by maidenly confusion, but a desperate grasping at any momentary respite which held a chance of escape.

"You shall have time, Gracieuse," he answered, mournfully, then, conscious of the doleful tone, became remorseful in regard to his own selfishness.

"Don't misunderstand," she said quickly; "we are friends, Jean—good, true friends—we are to remain so."

He began slightly to lose patience,—small blame to him.

"Do you mean that I am to give up all hope?" he asked.

"Ah, now you are getting cross again—please don't be cross—you frighten me so that you drive everything out of my head."

He comprehended, dimly, that it was in a measure acting, an effort to gain time, but he could not help putting that very effort down as an evidence in his own favour, and his irritation died away.

"Dear Gracieuse," he said, "I will do exactly what you bid me."

She turned toward him with a sudden resolve in her face.

"Be my friend—my brother," she said.

"That—what you will—only leave my hope," he answered; "my sweet, blessed hope for the future."

Again that look of anger, such as a woman insulted by some base proposal might have shown, passed over her countenance—faded quickly as if she recognized her own absurdity. She struggled for an instant with herself, as though ashamed of some hidden duplicity unworthy of her womanhood in the words she was compelled to speak; hesitated, but said—still with that miserable attempt at her usual playful manner,—

"I will have nothing whatever to do with the future—it must take care of itself; you are my friend, my brother."

"I am whatever you please to call me," sighed he.

She seized eagerly upon this opening.

"My good, kind Jean!" she exclaimed. "And—and you will not distress papa? Oh, Jean, I was not quite truthful! Of course I knew what papa wanted; but it can never be—never!"

Chegary rose and stood before her, white and stern.

"We are not children, Gracieuse," he said; "you have no right to play with me like this! I insist upon an answer. Do I take a hope with me or not?"

"You want to kill papa," moaned Gracieuse; "oh, if you talk in this way I shall hate you—hate you!"

"For God's, sake don't say that, Gracieuse!" he cried, forgetting his anger, his sense of ill-usage, in the pain caused by her words.

"No, no—I did not mean it! But you will not disturb papa—dear Jean, good Jean!" she cried.

"I will go back to Bayonne," he said wearily. "Do not be afraid, Gracieuse, I shall do nothing to pain your father. Never mind about me."

"Jean, Jean!"

"One more disappointed heart in the world is of no consequence," he went on, speaking with the usual selfishness of his sex, though, to do him justice, he did not utter the complaint from any idea that the sight of his pain might move her to give him the consolation many a woman has given a man—a hope—just because she could not bear the sight of his suffering,

and was ready to do anything which might relieve her from the feeling that the misery was due to her.

But Gracieuse did not yield to the weakness so common with her sex.

"I don't think you know what you are saying," she said; "if you did, it would be cruel and unmanly! Jean, I can promise you nothing but my friendship. Now let us have done. Take me home."

There was another brief silence, then he answered,—

"I beg your pardon. Yes, let us go home, my cousin."

He offered her his arm, but she did not seem to perceive it. While she still kept her place on the bench, and Chegary remained standing before her, Honour Pemberton and Monsieur de Vieuxville came down the avenue from the château and paused in the great stone gateway.

The Marquis had been paying a visit to the châtelaine, as Effie de Marsan had laughingly christened her. Some conversation, in regard to an idea of hers of wanting a number of young trees near the lodge removed to give room for a rose-garden, led to her walking down the avenue with De Vieuxville in order

to point out the spot and convince him of the feasibility of her plan—a thing of which he seemed a little doubtful in his quiet way. But of late this manner did not irritate Honour, it only added a certain zest to their contests, and inspired her with a wish to convince him, and, more than that, to hear him own she was right.

In the interest of their conversation, Honour had quite forgotten the object which brought her out of doors—in opposition to Mrs. Somers's will; not that there was the slightest reason why she should not go, only the old robin always felt it her duty mildly to oppose any proposition made by anybody, and was surprised beyond measure that Honour could be so careless of her health as to quit the house after sunset. For a wonder, it was Monsieur himself who took the principal share of the talk; he talked, too, about matters connected with himself and his family; induced wicked art on the part of his companion, who perceived that he was in that mood for confidence which will occasionally overtake the most reticent person, and felt irresistibly impelled to take advantage of his weakness.

Before either of them knew it, they had walked to the very gates, instead of turning off

to the right above the lodge where was the nook Honour desired to make the home of the roses.

"We have missed our way," she said, smiling.

"And unfortunately it is the way out. I hope your absence of mind is not to be taken as a hint," returned he, with an answering smile.

"I don't think I need reply to that," she said frankly, looking up at him as she spoke; but a sudden and inexplicable light in his eyes caused her for the first time a slight thrill of something more like embarrassment than she often reached in these later years which had accustomed her to the world and its exigencies.

She glanced down the road, with an undefined intention of uttering a remark about scenery or sky to fill the silence, and so chanced to see at the end of the vista of sycamores a pretty picture—Gracieuse Galais seated on the stone bench and Dr. Jean standing before her. She immediately forgot herself, Monsieur de Vieuxville, and her vague confusion.

"Look there," she said; "they are too far off to be disturbed. I have been careful not to say a word even to you; but I fancy my

pet plan is so near fulfilment that I need no longer keep it to myself."

He followed the direction of her eyes; looked at the pair—only for an instant; then turned away, saying, rather coldly,—

"You have a plan in regard to that young man and—Mademoiselle Galais?"

"I am sure her father must have told you," returned Honour; "the dear old man can no more keep a secret than—than any other of his sex," she added maliciously; "you thought I would say than a woman."

He smiled and answered jestingly, but his face changed; she had unconsciously learned to notice its every phase of expression.

"Don't you like him?" she asked, quickly. "Do you think it would be well?"

"Do I not think what would be well?"

"A marriage between those two? Of course you understand; please don't be tiresome and obtuse!"

Before he could reply an open carriage appeared at the turn of the road in the opposite direction—Madame de Marsan's landau, and Madame herself seated therein, looking as dainty and pretty an object as one could well imagine. She perceived them at once; did not exactly like to meet them standing there

together; partly because she never liked to see any man beside another woman; partly because she had a desire to find her cousin the sole gentleman favoured by the rich widow. When the carriage reached the gates, she ordered the coachman to stop.

"You dearest of women to give me a look at you," cried she gaily, kissing her hand to Honour and bowing to her companion. "I was just saying dreadful things about Madame de Rochefort for having kept me until it was too late to drive up to the château! How do you do? I need not ask that question of Monsieur de Vieuxville, since he has the happiness of standing there beside you."

Honour returned some fittingly nonsensical answer; but all the notice Monsieur took of the speech was to give Madame de Marsan one of his stately bows; the little woman seldom received other courtesy than that from him, and disliked him accordingly.

"I have had a letter from Gerard," she continued; "he is in a state of despair for fear he should have missed your ball, but he will be just in time—he comes back the day after to-morrow."

"I am charmed to hear it," returned Honour.

She felt Monsieur de Vieuxville's eyes upon

her; felt that she coloured slightly, though there was no earthly reason why she should, except because he looked, and that was none either, she quickly told herself. He glanced down the road. Gracieuse and her cousin had disappeared.

Madame de Marsan chatted for a few moments, then drove on; so gay and pretty that De Vieuxville rather wondered at himself for his prejudice against her. But, reasonable or not, the feeling was a very strong one, and as incurable as that of a big Newfoundland dog toward a sleek, velvet-pawed white cat, young enough to retain kittenish propensities for fun, but owning full-grown claws in spite of that.

"After all, we have not decided about the rose-garden," said Honour, when they were again alone. "I trust you will not be ill-natured, and refuse to cut down a few trees; they are none of them worth saving just there."

"I cannot fancy myself refusing, if they were the best in the park," he replied, as they moved away.

The words were themost *banal* compliment, yet something in the way of saying them struck Honour, little as she was given to paying special heed to the flattering speeches

of any man. He did not say more, and she returned no answer to his remark; in an instant vexed with herself that she had not made the jesting reply it was intended no doubt to call forth. She tried to break the silence after a few seconds; somehow she did not find it easy, though one of the chief mental qualities society admired was her ability to talk to anybody, find subjects congenial to her listener, such too as enabled him to show to advantage in return, and always to have ready the exact reply most appropriate to the occasion.

On this occasion, however, her tact appeared at fault. De Vieuxville did not speak. They were still at some distance from the spot where Honour proposed to have her rose-garden. She suddenly said the very thing she would not have wished to say, it was,—

"Why do you not like Effie de Marsan?"

"My mother was an American, so I have the Yankee right to reply to your question by another," said he, playfully, though the playfulness was confined to his words, for the voice was not quite pleasant. "Why do you like Mr. Gerard Mayne?"

"Because he is amusing, witty, and very good-natured," she answered, without hesi-

tation, though she stole a quick, wondering glance at him, unperceived. "The same reasons would hold good for your liking his cousin, yet I have the idea that you do not."

"I know her very slightly," he said, "and I know the gentleman still less. I should think though that, as you say, there is a strong family likeness."

"And both very warm-hearted," she added.

He was silent.

"Do you mean that you do not agree with me?" she asked.

"I can give no opinion; I have just said that I know them very slightly. I am better acquainted with Monsieur de Marsan; I admire his genius profoundly, and he is singularly pleasant and unpretentious."

"I am not sure but I like him with a reservation," returned Honour, I fear a little actuated by a spirit of contradiction. "He is so changeable and moody; genius is a sort of trapping that is out of place for every-day wear. I think he has a very unfortunate disposition, or temperament, whatever is the proper name to give it."

"I believe his wife thinks so," returned De Vieuxville, drily.

"Don't be unjust to Effie! She is my friend; you do not know her! She passes her life making excuses for her husband's oddities."

"I am aware she does," he said, in the same tone.

Honour stopped short, and held up her hand.

"I have three minds to quarrel with you," cried she.

"Please do not! I know I am neither witty, amusing, nor good-natured, but I am not to blame," he said, with the strange light which had confused her already coming back to his eyes.

They were near the place where Honour wished literally to make "the wilderness blossom as the rose." She began hurriedly to expatiate on the eligibilities of the spot—the improvement which the carrying out of her plan would be to that portion of the grounds, anxious to get away from the fancy which his manner and words forced upon her, but which savoured too much of the weakest sort of vanity for her to be willing to indulge it.

They agreed that the trees should be sacrificed—only some half-grown beeches—and in

the autumn the ground prepared for the parterres. Monsieur de Vieuxville, however, did not recover his good spirits, and left her with the feeling in her mind that he was troubled or annoyed.

Honour walked slowly back to the house, thinking of their interview. For the first time it occurred to her that this grave, serious man cared for her beyond the liking of ordinary friendship. Her heart fluttered strangely at the idea, and she hastened to accuse herself of folly, and hurried away from the thought as fast as possible; but she did not allow herself to recognize the real reason for this haste, which was that she feared, if once admitted, there might be a question to ask her own soul —a question she had no mind to face, though the bare possibility of asking it filled her with a pleasant trouble which sent her indoors with cheeks whose colour rivalled the tints of her favourite roses.

## CHAPTER IV.

### MONSIEUR PELLERIN'S SUCCESS.

HONOUR PEMBERTON'S proposed ball was a thing of sufficient social importance to be a great deal talked about in the neighbourhood. A number of Parisian celebrities were to be present; and still more attractive to poor human nature was the fact that the most renowned *restaurateur* of the Boulevards had sent skilled artists (everybody is an artist now-a-days, down to your hairdresser) to assist Madame Pemberton's *chef*, and was himself to appear in his august person on the day of the festivity, to see with his own eyes that the whole arrangements had been carried out in a manner to do credit to his fame.

Even the dames of the Legitimist families, straitened in means, had contrived to obtain new toilettes for the occasion, and it was known that Mademoiselle Flandin would appear in a costume devised by the immortal Worth, so unique in conception, so perfect in its elabora-

tion, that just to have the irritating bliss of regarding it would have been enough to make all the women wild to appear at the ball.

Honour had been exceedingly liberal in her invitations, yet there remained at least one individual terribly disappointed and indignant at the fact of her overlooking him. This was no less a personage than Monsieur Antoine Pellerin. He had been at the *fête* given at the Sugar Works, by a very simple but effectual *coup de main*. He forced Gerard Mayne to ask permission to bring him. Later, Monsieur Pellerin had called at the château and been civilly received, though Honour was not pleased with the man. His manners were good enough, as manners go in this degenerate age; still, he had not produced a favourable impression, perhaps because in the very outset he committed the error of paying her compliments, and Honour always considered such homage an outrage to her common sense.

Then too Monsieur de Vieuxville had spoken of him with slighting contempt, and Monsieur's opinions had, in these days, a much greater influence over Mrs. Pemberton than she knew. It was just after Pellerin's visit that Honour began her list of invitations—never an easy matter where a ball is concerned—

and in her case the difficulties were increased by Mrs. Somers's interference. The good lady made so many blunders, so many preposterous propositions, even to the proposing the names of acquaintances at the furthest corner of the globe, including people who had been dead and gone long before Honour was born, and who died without ever seeing Normandy, that really little blame could attach to her if she got so confused by her relative's astounding proposals that she did not exactly know in the end whether she had confined her invitations to living people within reach, or had distributed a generous share to the four corners of the earth, and essayed to penetrate the world of shadows into the bargain.

One thing was certain: she forbore to insert Monsieur Pellerin's name in her list, until she should find an opportunity to consult De Vieuxville, and before the opportunity offered she had forgotten all about the rival sugar-maker. As for the modest Antoine himself, he probably would not have remained so long without reminding Madame of his existence; but, before he could reasonably cease hoping that he should receive an invitation, business called him away to the South of France, and he only returned a week previous to the time set for the ball. Mayne was

in Bavaria, and there was nobody else upon whose shoulders he could transfer the dilemma in which he found himself when, on coming home, he discovered to his rage that the expected card was not among the epistles awaiting his arrival. Still he hesitated—there were limits even to the assurance of Monsieur Pellerin—and he hoped always that Mayne might come back and end the difficulty, so far as he was personally concerned.

But now only a day remained. Mayne had not returned, and Madame Pemberton had given no sign of consciousness that he, Antoine Pellerin, was in the flesh.

To be ranked among the *élite* of Normandy was one of the chief desires of Monsieur Pellerin's soul. The very cream of the *élite*, not only of the province but of the capital itself, were invited to this ball, and thither Monsieur Pellerin meant to go by one means or another. No festivity of equal magnitude had taken place for years within the reach of what, thanks to railways, might be construed into comprising his neighbourhood. It had only been lately, and after submitting to numerous rebuffs such as only very grand people can offer in the perfection of well-bred insolence, after more plotting and harder work and meaner fawning

and sycophancy than a politician employs to secure a fat municipal office, that Pellerin had succeeded in establishing even the show of a foothold among the appallingly great families near Vieuxville.

To be left out on the present occasion would, Monsieur Pellerin felt, be to lose the ground he had attained by such hard labour, and he had no intention of suffering so signal a defeat. Being only a man, there were limits to the humiliations to which he could descend for the sake of social success; where women are concerned there are none.

So Monsieur Antoine had waited and hoped till this final day of grace arrived, and brought with it no ray of light—neither Mayne's arrival nor late recollection on the lady's part. He swore to himself that the sun should not set upon his humiliation and downfall, even if a miracle equal to that of Joshua's were necessary to prevent such a catastrophe.

Attired to conquer—he dressed remarkably well—the doughty Pellerin took advantage of the noon train to go to Sainton. He found a carriage at the station, and drove over to the château, mentally pausing, as he passed the sugar manufactory, to anathematize Monsieur de Vieuxville as the cause of his mortification.

Honour, seated alone in her shadowy old library, was surprised by the announcement of his name. She would have been surprised to see any visitor appear on this particular day; that it should be Monsieur Pellerin of all persons, passed belief.

She concealed her astonishment, however, as well as she could, and welcomed him decorously, though with a coolness which might have warned her, had she thought about it, that she was less successful than she could have wished in hiding her feeling that the visit was somewhat ill-timed and slightly intrusive. But Monsieur Pellerin did not know her sufficiently to understand her various shades of manner, and if he had it would have made no difference in the carrying out of the programme he had laid down.

"I trust Madame Pemberton has not forgotten me," he said, rather less composed than usual. "I did myself the honour of calling after the *fête*, but was so unfortunate as to find Madame out; since then I have been absent, and only returned a couple of days ago."

He had shortened the count by a week lacking forty-eight hours, but that was a trifle not worth mentioning.

"I found your card; it was very kind of you

to come again so soon," Mrs. Pemberton replied. I am afraid there was the slightest possible approach to a pause before pronouncing the two closing words of her sentence, but I think it was involuntary.

"I must begin by apologizing for presenting myself to-day of all others, but I am a little troubled, and I could not wait for an instant after learning that certain events might have given you an unfavourable opinion of my conduct."

The beginning of his explanation reminded Honour that she had forgotten to consult Monsieur de Vieuxville as to the propriety of sending the gentleman a card for the ball, and that she had rather intended he should receive the courtesy. It did not occur to her that he could have come to beg the favour, and it seemed to her that any present mention of her forgotten idea would be more annoying than the original neglect could possibly have been. As for the rest of his phrase, it conveyed no meaning whatever to her mind, and she was obliged to say so.

"Of what events are you speaking?" she asked.

"I fancied you would have known at once to what I alluded," returned he, with a bow and smile. But in his effort to be perfectly at

ease, he assumed a jaunty, almost brisk manner, and there was nothing Honour so much detested in man or woman as briskness.

"Indeed I do not in the least," she replied, courteous as ever, but growing a shade more stately. "I can only assure you, Monsieur, that, on the occasion when you kindly gave me the opportunity of making your acquaintance at my little *fête*, I trust nothing occurred which could have led you to suppose that I had been guilty of the bad taste you seem to attribute to me."

The speech was complimentary; it was insolent, too, viewed from a certain point, and Monsieur Pellerin possessed acuteness enough to appreciate the latter signification, only he was too anxious to carry out his ends to think about it.

"Certainly not," he said; "you were so kind that I quite forgot my previous fear lest I might be wrong in allowing my friend Mayne to persuade me that his acquaintance with you was sufficient to present me."

"Oh," returned she, with the sweetest possible little laugh, though she was nettled, "I am so fond of Madame de Marsan, that I have fallen into the habit of allowing Monsieur Mayne to usurp some of his cousin's privileges

—as a friend. In the case of which you speak, he of course did me a favour which deserves my thanks."

This last, because she feared the opening phrase had been curt, yet she was conscious that the elaborate close admitted of an ironical signification, if Monsieur Pellerin chose so to interpret it. She rather wished he would, and go away. She had not before thought enough about him to come to a decision, but now she felt certain that she disliked her present visitor, and always should.

"You are too good," said Pellerin; "you embarrass me with a sense of my own unworthiness."

She would have liked to tell him that she was glad to embarrass him on any terms or in any way; but this world is not the palace of truth, and one cannot behave as if it were, unless one has the good luck to be born a Patagonian savage, and never to leave one's native territory. So Honour only bowed, thus mentally accentuating her concurrence in Monsieur's humble opinion of his merits.

"And now, as I am aware you must be occupied, I will, if you permit, get at once to the reason for my visit," pursued Monsieur Pellerin.

"Yes," said Honour, in a tone of the most polite indifference.

"I have had great pain in learning, when too late, that I had unintentionally interfered with certain business plans of yours. We are rivals, of course, but I assure you I would not for the world have allowed myself to be drawn into any transaction which could possibly have caused you annoyance," continued he, bowing again.

"I really am as much in the dark as ever," returned Honour, with another smile divided between courtesy intended for his benefit and a protest purely personal against that jaunty manner, which she would, in her obstinacy, consider briskness, and regard as an unpardonable offence.

"I am speaking of the Glasgow and Bristol contracts," he said, "which I thought myself so fortunate to secure until, since my return, I find that their procurance had entered into your plans also, and that—I must speak plainly—"

"Yes," Honour said again, in response to his pause. But the ejaculation was one of simple surprise this time.

"That you had reason to think yourself aggrieved by my obtaining them."

"But I have—" She checked herself. She was about to say she had the contracts. She changed the words to,—"I do not think you have interfered with any plans my business manager may have formed, Monsieur Pellerin. You certainly have been grossly misinformed as to any expression of grievance on my part in regard to any business matter whatever. I did not even know you had procured such. But no doubt they are with other English firms than those I have heard of."

"No, Madame, only those two were offered," he said. His quick wits showed him an opportunity of dealing a blow at his enemy, and he seized the opportunity. "Naturally you leave the working of affairs in your manager's hands. Such matters are tiresome occupations for a lady. I am sure, too, that you are fortunate in the capabilities of the gentleman who holds that position, still—still I am surprised he did not mention—"

He broke off in a pretended embarrassment, which certainly was very neatly done.

Honour waited for him to continue.

"I beg your pardon!" he exclaimed. "I am merely a rough *homme d'affaires!* I only want to say how glad I am that you are not offended with me—that you knew nothing

about the matter. As for Monsieur de Vieuxville's displeasure, I must bear that. I should like, though, for my own satisfaction, to explain the whole matter, if you will kindly allow me."

From first to last he could not well have devised a more annoying speech or manner, but Honour only said, "I shall be happy, of course, to listen."

He did explain, in a few clear, well-chosen sentences. But when he had concluded, Honour was more in the dark than ever. He managed to make it appear that De Vieuxville's negligence had lost the contracts, that he, Monsieur Pellerin, had only accepted on the distinct understanding that he was in no way interfering with the rival works. Only one thing was clear to Honour's mind, De Vieuxville could not have been negligent, he must have done right. Then a new thought started up in her mind. Work was going on as if the contracts had been secured. De Vieuxville would explain. No doubt there were offers of which Monsieur Pellerin knew nothing. De Vieuxville would make everything clear. All she had to do at present was to get rid of her visitor with as little delay as possible.

"I assure you, Monsieur, I acquit you of any wrong whatever," she said, though she was not quite sure what he feared she thought he had or had not done. "Just now my head is so full of my ball, that I can think of nothing else. You know such matters are very important to us women."

"I was not aware until I reached Sainton that you were giving a ball," he answered, "else I should have deferred my visit until a less inopportune moment. I beg you to believe I should not now or at any other time have intruded upon you without a reason which was to me personally important, where my feelings, my ideas of honour, were concerned."

Again she remembered that he had received no card. She feared by his tone that he was hurt at her neglect, and she could not bear to wound anybody.

"But I trust I shall have the pleasure of seeing you to-morrow night," she said. She could not fib, but she lacked courage to make matters worse by telling him he had been forgotten.

"Pardon," he replied, laughing; "I have received no invitation. Please don't think I am begging for one. I perceive, by what you

said, that one was sent. In so large a household as yours, subordinates will be careless, just as they will in business establishments like yours or mine."

She knew he was hinting at De Vieuxville, but of course could say nothing.

"Then, if you will overlook the error, I shall hope to see you," she said.

"I shall come, with pleasure," he replied. "I am only too glad to find that I had not unwittingly made myself unpleasant to you."

He was hinting now that he had believed the omission arose from her anger at his obtaining the contract. It was a bitter pill to swallow, that of any person's presuming to think she could be so petty; but it was no easier to say a word in her own defence—considering all the circumstances—than in the case of Monsieur de Vieuxville.

Presently he took his leave, perfectly satisfied with his success in every way, especially the unexpected gratification of thinking that he had planted a suspicion of her manager in her mind—if going no further than an idea that Monsieur de Vieuxville took too much upon himself.

He left Honour in such a state of irrita-

tion with him personally, that she could not think of anything else. She had not leisure even to be angry with him as she could have wished, for Mrs. Somers entered, wringing her hands, uttering incoherent exclamations, and behaving generally so like an escaped lunatic, that Honour's first thought was that some fearful accident had occurred, forgetful, as most persons would have been, when taken by surprise, that such agitation on the part of her relative was as likely to have no meaning whatever as to be caused by a matter of importance.

"I *am* astonished at you, Honour!" cried she, as soon as she could get breath,—perfectly regardless of the hurried questions her cousin had uttered. "I *am* astonished! To be sitting here as tranquil as a cucumber in June, and the very house—I was always sure it was a crazy old barrack, and would fall down some day—being absolutely pulled to bits over our heads—pulled to bits!"

"My dear Aurora, what has happened?" Honour asked, getting her wits back enough to be astonished in her turn at her own folly in having been startled by anything the old lady could do or say. "At least the main part of the house is safe, or I

should have heard the noise. What is really the matter?"

"These new men are breaking every bit of china we have," cried Mrs. Somers; "every bit! there is not enough left to set out the table decently; and there you sit as peaceful as an alabaster image. I *am* surprised at you."

"What has escaped the general wreck?" demanded Honour.

"They have broken that great vase in the dining-room," moaned Aurora. "Everything is going wrong—there will be no supper ready, and not a plate to eat it on if there were—not a plate! And there you sit like —like a—and nothing done. How *can* you, Honour?"

"I won't," replied Honour, good-naturedly rising and moving toward the scene of operations—the great banqueting-hall, where the Parisians, aided by Céline and Pierre, were at work, and doing their work well. One of the men had tilted the great vase, in order to wind a wreath about it, and this had caused Aurora's insane outburst. Once in the room, Honour found herself appealed to on every side, and was detained so long, that by the time she obtained her release she had forgotten all

about Monsieur Pellerin and his disturbing communications.

Effie de Marsan had good-naturedly taken her guests off her hands for the day; and when Honour was free—Mrs. Somers detained her a good hour after her escape from the supper and ball rooms, by threatened hysterics —she had to think about getting ready for the dinner at De Marsan's house, which she had promised to grace by her presence, and to use considerable persuasion to bring Céline away from the pleasant task of scolding the men to aid her toilette.

Monsieur Pellerin reached Sainton in season for the four o'clock train to Rouen, and reached home well content with the success of his bold *démarche*, and thoroughly convinced that he had shrouded his real errand in such mystery, that Madame Pemberton had not the slightest idea he had come for the express purpose of securing a tardy invitation to her ball.

As for Honour, by the time she was driving toward her friend's house, she was calm enough to wonder that she should have allowed herself to be annoyed by anything which a person of Monsieur Pellerin's stamp could say or do. But unimportant as the procedure

seemed just then in her eyes, it was of consequence, because Fate, in her fondness for bringing apparent impossibilities to pass, had decreed that Monsieur Pellerin and his performances, insignificant as she deemed him and them, should be of consequence in Honour Pemberton's life.

Monsieur Pellerin sat in his private office the next day, and hugged himself metaphorically as he remembered that this night he should be among Madame Pemberton's guests, in spite of Armand de Vieuxville and his machinations.

Honour, while dressing for Effie's dinner, had remembered to send an invitation, and Pellerin had fully decided in his own mind that the previous lack was entirely owing to the Marquis. He dwelt with much complacency upon the stab he had dealt that gentleman, and projected his soul into the future to study clearly what benefits might accrue to himself in case he could succeed in fully exposing the wiles and plots of his enemy.

It was late in the afternoon; Monsieur Pellerin had begun to think about deserting the vulgar haunts of business, and taking an hour's extra rest before dinner, in order that the evening might find him fresh and bloom-

ing, when a gentleman was announced, and Gerard Mayne entered the private office.

"Welcome back, my dear boy!" cried Pellerin, rising to seize his visitor's hand, which he shook cordially. "So, you are safely returned from your journey; you look as well as possible."

"I look as tired as the devil, and as dusty," responded Mayne, though the laugh which accompanied the words prevented their sounding exactly fretful or cross. "So far back I have certainly reached; if I get safely out of your Giant Despair's den, I suppose I may count on safety."

"The droll boy—always the same merry boy!" cried Monsieur Pellerin. "And you positively stopped to see me before going on to be welcomed by the lovely cousin and all your friends?"

"I suppose the delicate reminder I received from you the day I set out meant that I should," replied Mayne, brusquely. "I am here just in time, and, what is more to the purpose, I have that accursed interest money which you warned me your friend—a very unpleasant person he must be, by the way—would have, whether or not."

"Strict," sighed Monsieur Pellerin; "it is

the fault of business men, but after all he must live."

"I don't see the necessity," exclaimed Mayne; "infernal old Jew—you said he was a Jew—let us say damn him, will you?"

"He shall be damned with all my heart, if you like," said Pellerin. "I assure you, dear boy, if I had not been hard pushed myself, I would have paid the interest out of my own pocket."

"Don't you think you could manage it? It would be a great favour," cried Mayne. "Come, I am sure you could at least persuade your Jewish friend to wait a while."

Pellerin laughed, but evidently did not enjoy the joke over-much, as he replied that the Israelite's claim really must be satisfied. Mayne had strong suspicions that this determined friend was a myth, and that in reality Monsieur Pellerin was his creditor for the sum advanced to settle his debts at the time he had, in his despair, been led into confiding in that gentleman. However, it was useless to complicate matters by a quarrel. He had the money—that was the principal thing; it could be retained for a few weeks out of the sum he had collected for his grandmother. The half-yearly instalment of his income would be

received in season to refund the amount to the old lady, unless he could persuade her to make him a present of it. He indulged this hope, because he had arranged her foreign matters on a new and better footing, and this fact might put her in a good humour. To do him justice, he had no intention of withholding from her the fact that he had used a portion of her money; she could keep the sum back from his allowance if she chose.

He counted out the bank-notes on the table before Pellerin, and received a written acknowledgment.

"Now I must be off," Mayne said; "I want to catch the down train."

"Don't you know you are too late?" returned Pellerin. "They have changed the time—it passed half-an-hour ago."

"Confound the luck! Then I must drive over; and not a pair of beasts that will take me under two mortal hours."

"I know a pair that will take you in an hour and ten minutes, if you will stop for dinner with me, and let me drive you over. Had you forgotten to-night is Madame Pemberton's ball?"

"So she has invited you," returned Mayne, with a slight emphasis on the closing pronoun, which was not exactly civil.

"Strange if she had not, since I was introduced by you as your friend—I think you said particular friend," said Pellerin.

"I'll be hanged if I did!" cried Mayne, laughing in spite of his vexation, for his nature was so whimsical and his appreciation of the humorous side of things so strong, that he would have jested on his road to the gallows. "There is a vulgar old English proverb in regard to a toad under a harrow, which has been too thoroughly realized in my case for me to have used that form of speech."

"Your particular friend," repeated Pellerin, unmoved. "And you were right, little Gerard: I am very fond of you."

Mayne made him a low bow. It might be a sign of gratitude or a derisive mockery. Monsieur Pellerin was as unmoved as ever.

"Come to my house and dine," he continued; "there are several matters I want to talk over with you."

In the end Mayne consented. He must not provoke Pellerin too far. Indeed, he did not much mind going—he rather wondered at himself therefor; but his nature was such a ceaseless puzzle to his own comprehension, that he had ceased trying to arrive at an explanation of its vagaries.

Monsieur Pellerin's phaeton was waiting outside, and they drove to his house—one of those gloomy old Rouen mansions, whose exterior told of decayed grandeur and fallen fortunes, but the inside was the picture of comfort down to the minutest particular.

"I am always wondering—it is vulgar, but I can't help it, so I do wonder—why you choose to live in this dreary old barrack, instead of buying a villa near the town," said Mayne, as they passed under the ancient gateway and entered the court.

Monsieur Pellerin smiled. He clung so firmly to that figment of his imagination, a connexion with the old Breton family of his name, that to him this preference for the dark, dismal dwelling was a positive proof of his almost royal blood.

"Every man has his fancies, dear boy; you have yours," was all he said; but the tone and the significance of the words caused Mayne to refrain from any answer whatsoever.

Nothing could have been more luxurious or in better taste than the suite of apartments through which Pellerin conducted his guest, and the dinner served them within an hour was worthy the bijou of a room in which they ate it,—both worthy his acceptance, would have

been the way for the host to put it, for Monsieur Antoine had unlimited faith in himself and his deservings.

The meal was very pleasant. Pellerin could be an agreeable companion when he put his colossal self-esteem a little aside. He had travelled a great deal and read much, though he possessed small natural taste for books; but he had been determined to remedy his want of early education, and has shown in this the energy which was a chief characteristic of his nature.

Mayne, too, was in one of his most charming moods; not only that interest impelled him to keep on friendly terms with his host, but he really was so heedless and excitable, that when Pellerin exerted himself to be amiable, he could forget the hold the man kept over him, and the irritating fear which haunted his solitary hours, when he could not escape reflection that any day, if he chanced to cross or oppose the crafty sugar-maker's plans, that gentleman's power would be used with unscrupulous hardness, to the ruin of all his earthly prospects.

They vied with each other in telling humorous stories; they discussed numerous subjects; and naturally at last arrived at the one upon which two men are pretty sure to fall

sooner or later—women. Perhaps both had drunk more freely than they were aware. Pellerin prided himself on his wines, and brought his most choice, knowing that his guest was capable of appreciating them. Like any other connoisseur, Pellerin would rather have bestowed his rare vintages on an enemy alive to their merits than a bosom friend whose palate had been less highly cultivated.

Not that Pellerin was the young man's foe so far as feeling went. He liked the gay, genial fellow, was always delighted to secure his companionship, and did not willingly remind Mayne of his power except when rebellion on the other's part rendered it necessary; but he had the feline disposition, and could not resist scratching almost involuntarily.

The *tête-à-tête* did not end as pleasantly as it had begun. Some remark Pellerin made in regard to the De Marsans nettled Mayne. He took his revenge by sneering when Pellerin talked of Madame Pemberton, and betrayed that he really had the fatuity to believe it would be possible for him to please the young widow if he should decide that it was worth while to try.

So, before they knew it, the overheated brains of both were in a state of sufficient

irritation to render a quarrel easy, and it arrived at last, brought on by some slighting allusion to Gracieuse Galais in connexion with De Vieuxville, upon whom Monsieur Pellerin had been solacing himself by lavishing a deal of rhetorical abuse. To do Monsieur justice, he firmly believed De Vieuxville a rascal, and had just been saying that one day or another Madame Pemberton would discover it—he hoped before it should be too late.

"He is as bad as his father in other ways, too, only he hides his vices more carefully," continued Pellerin. "There will be gossip about him and that pretty little daughter of old Galais's if she does not take care."

"You lie!" cried Mayne, furiously. "Curse your tongue! if you will slander women of position, at least spare a friendless girl who is as pure and good a creature as ever lived."

"I have not, at all events, accused you of being her lover," retorted Pellerin; "so you need not take up the cudgels. I repeat what I said before—there will be gossip if she is not careful; more than that, the villain would turn it to account if he could."

Mayne started up from his chair, wine-glass in hand; he would have flung the contents full in Pellerin's face, had not the latter knocked

it on the table. There was a sort of tussle for a few seconds; Pellerin got his senses back the first.

"I believe we have been drinking too much," said he. "Come, come, I did not mean to offend you! But you are absurd, man; you cannot be the chevalier of all the women, you know."

Mayne answered angrily, but presently cooled down.

"*Allons!*" pursued Pellerin; "we must not quarrel! You are a good fellow—I am a good fellow! After all, before we have done with De Vieuxville, we will leave him powerless to harm anybody."

They drove away together on sufficiently amicable terms, and Pellerin's horses reached De Marsan's house within the time he had promised they could do. Pellerin waited in the salon while Mayne went away to dress. He stopped in De Marsan's room, and found the husband and wife in the heat of an outrageous quarrel—of course over Arthur de Chantal; for, ever since the day of old Madame's visit, Effie had been behaving worse than ever, and had driven Léon nearly wild with downright jealousy.

Effie was dressed, but De Marsan had not begun his toilet.

"I shall stop at home," he said, when Mayne had succeeded in somewhat quieting the storm.

Effie laughed tauntingly, and left the apartment.

"That is what she wants," he continued; "that is why she began her scene."

"Then go to punish her," returned Mayne; and his persuasions were finally successful.

Before fame and money reached De Marsan, Effie used to talk of his indolence; now, when she desired to torment him, and knew that he was tired and discouraged enough to be hurt by such declarations, she would declare that he was rapidly losing ground in public favour—that his present efforts were feeble and unworthy his reputation. She had done this to-night, and had given him a reason therefor.

"You will never be permitted to have a real success—never; you are too vile; God is too just to allow it."

We men, women still oftener, express and feel contempt for a poor wretch who cannot manage his wife. As I go on with these records I can clearly see that Léon de Marsan appears a very weak man; yet it is not plain to me what other course he could have pursued. He could not shut his wife up; he could not render her infamous by a quarrel with her

admirer. Expostulations were useless; pleadings wasted. Commands were laughed at; promises kept in the letter, and broken in the spirit. Effie was an artful, not a deceitful woman. She hated a downright lie, but she had a faculty of making compromises with her conscience, whose wire-drawn distinctions would have puzzled Machiavelli.

## CHAPTER V.

### INTO DREAM-LAND.

The great rooms of the old château were really a beautiful sight, with their countless lights and their festal decorations. Honour dressed early, and came downstairs before any of the visitors in the house had left their chambers, wishing to walk through the suites of apartments, and see with her own eyes that her instructions had been properly carried out.

Monsieur de Vieuxville, arriving before the hour when guests could be expected—in accordance with a promise Honour had exacted from him—found her in the supper-room. Her soul was troubled as to whether certain marvellous ancient tapestries, which she and Céline had unearthed in their researches through the disused part of the château, were properly arranged.

As he crossed the threshold he saw her standing in the centre of the fine old room, and paused. Putting aside the fact that she

made a lovely picture in herself, there was something added which might have flattered the vanity of a stoic—only the words do not mean much, since experience proves to us that even a stoic is as weak as water where a woman is concerned!

He stood still and looked at her. In the picture-gallery, where the long rows of portraits of dead and gone De Vieuxvilles caused an imaginative person to feel as if he had ventured among an assemblage of ghosts, hung a painting of a certain Countess Catherine, dead two hundred years back, arrayed in the very costume in which she had gone forth to meet her bridegroom, a Duke of Mantua.

In these days, when a woman may wear anything in the way of costume, save the straight petticoats and plain waists of our mothers, it was allowable for Honour to have that dress imitated. Of course, as she was to play hostess, she had omitted the barbaric splendour of the jewels, wearing only an old-fashioned set of pearls.

The robe was blue and white—gorgeous brocades as heavy and rich as those of ancient days, but falling in soft folds, which were a decided improvement upon the stiffness of similar mediæval fabrics. The legend ran that

the beautiful Catherine had been *vouée à la Vierge*, and on her bridal day insisted upon this mingling of the hues sacred to her patroness.

Perhaps she offended the Virgin by forsaking her ranks—she had been originally destined to a cloister; for the chronicle goes on to add that, six years after the day she donned that dress to go to the altar, Catherine died in a dreary, desolate castle in the midst of the Mantuan marshes—died of neglect, hunger, and miasma, owing to her husband's jealous cruelty. But that has nothing to do with the present.

Honour Pemberton had selected the costume because Monsieur de Vieuxville once praised it when he was playing cicerone for her benefit in the portrait-gallery of his ancestors. She had wondered if he would notice! At the last moment, when Céline was enduing her therein, she had been troubled by scruples lest he might misinterpret the feeling which had caused her to choose the robe as a model, and directly after grew indignant with herself for fearing that he could be vain enough, coarse-minded enough, to mistake the impulse by which she had been actuated.

There he stood in the doorway, and looked at her. She turned and saw him; turning not

because she had been apprised of his arrival, but just from one of those inexplicable influences whereat we laugh, and so lie to our own souls, because we know that the consciousness has arisen from the unerring workings of that mysterious law of our being which draws us toward or repels us from men and women without volition on our part.

She came quickly forward to meet him; speaking gaily, perhaps to hide a certain pleasant confusion caused by the admiration she had read in his eyes when she perceived his presence.

"I was afraid you had forgotten that I wanted your opinion," she said; "these tapestries have hung heavy on my soul all day—I don't mean a pun—literally! Tell me at once—was my idea a success?"

"A success in every way," he said, moving forward to offer his hand, while the rare, beautiful smile she had learned unconsciously to watch for softened his stern mouth, and his rapid glance, taking in every detail of her costume, included that in his praise.

"I am so glad," she said, with an almost childlike eagerness, all the more flattering from its contrast to her usual demeanour; "I have set my heart on my ball being perfection.

Come, see how grand all the old rooms look. I shall never forgive you if you are not satisfied with my efforts!"

"It is certain I should not merit forgiveness, but I hope I am not quite bad enough to be ranked in that category of sinners," he replied, with face and voice so bright and pleasant that he looked five years younger than usual.

They passed through the ball-room—its floor waxed to such an extent that to traverse it was like passing over a sea of glass—along the salons, the card-rooms, and the places where Honour's wisdom had set buffets for the serving of tea and punch, wherewith to solace people's souls before the supper-hall should be opened. They peeped into the shadowy boudoirs intended for the convenience of wandering couples who might like for a little to get away from the glare and tumult, and reached the tiny chamber which closed in the suite. Honour often sat here, and had fitted it up with special care. Every object in the way of furniture was a priceless relic; each of the cabinet pictures arranged among the bright hangings, a gem; the very carpet that covered the floor, its white ground dotted with scarlet leaves, a work of art which only Aubusson's looms could have executed.

"I had forgotten the old barrack could be made to look so beautiful," he said, with a sudden sadness tinging his smile; "I have not seen it so gorgeously lighted since I was a child. I remember once my mother giving a ball to please her husband—but of course it was a sorry affair compared to what you have done."

"Does it pain you?" Honour inquired softly. "I can't express what I mean—but I have so often wanted to ask. Does it—do you hate to see me here? I mean—now I cannot at all put it into words, but I am sure you understand."

"I am sure I do," he answered; "and there is one thing inexpressibly sweet to me—that you should be kind enough to care what my feelings might be. But, believe me, it pleases me to have my old house in your hands! If I could realize the dream of my life, that of holding it as my own, there would be one shadow on my joy—the knowledge that I should no longer see it brightened by the ruling spirit of this new *régime*."

He spoke the words too earnestly for compliment; so earnestly that he seemed unconscious of the full meaning they might naturally convey to the woman by his side, free, marriage-

able, whose wealth had enabled her to make of his ancestral home the choice abode which poverty had prevented him from doing.

Only very lately had he been beguiled into speaking of himself or his family. Never until the day but one before this night had he uttered a word which could cause her to think she had touched that proud heart. But this speech, taken in connexion with what had gone before during that twilight ramble, made Honour certain that he did care. She could not help feeling it, nor could she prevent the quick throb of her pulses which warned her that such knowledge was pleasant. She went further than this. For the first time, while listening to his words, she allowed her own heart to make its voice audible. She knew, and was glad and proud to know, that, unconsciously to herself, he had taken a place in her life which no other man had ever succeeded in winning—that these last few weeks had been fuller of sunshine and hope than all the previous years of her womanhood.

She was so engrossed by her quick reflection and its delicious confusion, that she was not aware she had left his sentence unanswered, till he said half shyly, half proudly,—

"Ought I not to have said that?"

Her heart fluttered still more wildly, but her voice was firm; she forced herself to look at him as she answered, with the tact of a woman accustomed to society, making her reply sound like the reponse to an ordinary compliment,—

"I should have been satisfied with no less; you have made me sure that my ball will be a success." She paused, then added (oh, only a few hours later she wished she had bitten her tongue out before she allowed it to speak the words which followed—words which haunted her long after, pricking her womanly pride like the points of a score of tiny knives), "I think there would have been a little lack if you had not said it."

His eyes lighted with a sudden fire; his whole face softened inexpressibly as he said in a broken voice,—

"You would have cared—you would have cared?"

Before she could speak, even if any words had been attainable at that instant, the hangings of the *portière* were swept aside, and Mrs. Somers entered, calling,—

"Are you here, Honour? I have been looking for you everywhere! Monsieur de Vieuxville, is that you? I am *so* surprised to see you!"

The sensations which agitated Honour were so new in her experience that she could not meet the interruption with the usual composure of her sex. Positively the man had the advantage over her in the matter of self-possession. She remembered this afterwards, and the recollection increased her anger and shame. Monsieur de Vieuxville turned toward the old lady, who remained poised on one foot in the doorway, with a ludicrous resemblance to a robin that sees a crumb and is kept from snatching it by the sight of possible enemies.

"Did you think I was not invited, Mrs. Somers?" he asked gaily.

"O good gracious!" she cried, hopping forward into the room. "What an idea! I *should* have been astonished indeed if Honour had forgotten *you*. I was not likely to let her do that."

"I am much obliged for your kind thoughtfulness, since it compelled Madame to recollect me," he said, laughing.

"Oh, I did not mean that! I am sure Honour built on your coming—did you not, dear? Mercy on us, don't let Monsieur think you could have been so rude! Why, dear me —good gracious!—"

Here the robin became so agitated, that the

rest of her speech was nearly unintelligible, though it seemed to hold ejaculations of surprise divided between Honour and the gentleman—an assurance that she was astounded Honour could have done anything to waken such an idea in Monsieur's mind—to him a reproof that he could suppose Mrs. Pemberton such a monster as to have run the risk of forgetting him.

"My dear cousin," said Honour, finding voice to break in on the strangled chirpings, "I am sure Monsieur de Vieuxville does not think anything of the sort."

"I should hope not," croaked Aurora; "but men are very touchy—marquises especially. Oh, I forgot you don't like to be called by your title, Monsieur; but, after all, how can you talk at all unless you address a man correctly? If you want cake, you don't ask for butter!" she added, triumphantly, as she sank into a chair panting, quite overcome by her unusual fluency, especially by this closing comparison, which the dear soul felt to be a triumph in the matter of declamation, and was rather inclined to think she must have unexpectedly bloomed into a poet.

"I 'll be either cake or butter, as you please," laughed De Vieuxville.

"Mercy on me, Honour, don't let him talk like that!" cried Aurora. "It makes me think of the time you were so ill with the fever! I do wish you wouldn't, Monsieur, for with the party and all there's no time to do anything for you, and vaccination would be of no use since it is not small-pox! Mercy's sake! try and put off losing your head till the ball is over, if it is fever you say you have!"

"I will try my best to keep it decently in order, but I am afraid it will be difficult," he said, laughing still, but giving one quick glance at Honour which sent a flush to her cheeks.

"I am so warm!" cried Aurora. "Honour, I am surprised you put me into black velvet! I feel as if I were a walking funeral, and this feather on my head makes me look just like the hearse!"

In spite of all expostulation from her relative and the outraged Céline (whose Parisian taste had been disgusted by the unfitness of the garb), Mrs. Somers had insisted upon attiring herself in a pall-like garment of sable velvet, with a long white ostrich plume floating over her lace head-dress. This plume, be it said *en passant*, nearly put out a score of eyes in the course of the evening, for Satan entered it, as he often does inanimate objects. It

refused to float gracefully down her shoulder, as a decent-minded plume would have done; it stood out straight over her forehead, as if it had been a quill instead of a feather, and made unexpected dashes at the visual organs of unwary people who ventured within its range. Once it poked old Madame de Saumont's false curls out of place; once it disarranged Monsieur de Rocheville's wig (a triumph of art so perfect that he really fancied he believed it his own hair), and those two injured ones hated Madame Pemberton all their lives in consequence, blaming her rather more because she had permitted Mrs. Somers to become such a boarder's bayonet, than if she had sported the assaulting weapon on her own front.

But at the present moment Aurora's confessions were stopped, and Honour's confusion —in regard to which she could feel no shame, until later its memory came up to add to the overwhelming consciousness of her own stupidity—by the sound of voices in one of the adjoining rooms. The guests stopping in the house had descended. At the same instant the roll of wheels from without announced the arrival of the first comers.

Honour hurried away, getting back the self-possession to remember to ask Monsieur de

Vieuxville to follow with Aurora. Otherwise the old robin might forget it was her duty to stand by the hostess while she received the guests, and hop off into the supper-room to peck at stray morsels on the table (if the servants would let her), probably still influenced by those vague reminiscences of a previous existence wherein she had found her daily food in that precarious bird-fashion.

In less than an hour the rooms were well filled, the music rang gaily out from the ball-room, and already everybody was pronouncing the *fête* a success.

The De Marsans had arrived—rather late. Effie's first glance about the ball-room put her in excellent spirits. Mademoiselle Flandin was dancing—dancing badly as she always did, and the much-talked-of Worth dress was as unbecoming as possible. Her own costume was especially successful, making her look very young and pretty. She had already seen that Madame de Chantal and her son were present. As soon as the music ended she managed to get close to Mademoiselle Flandin and engage her in conversation for a few seconds. The mirror near told her that she had never appeared to better advantage, or the young heiress to worse. She found serene satisfaction

in prolonging the conversation, because she knew both Arthur and his mother were regarding the scene; besides, it was part of her plan to be intimate with Mademoiselle Flandin. She made herself so charming, that the little girl—who could never properly realize her moneyed importance — was grateful for her kindness, and conceived a friendship for the lady to which she clung even when later both her father and Madame de Chantal, in their rage, unwisely tried to disturb her confidence.

Old Madame had already taken advantage of her son's submission to open formal negotiations with Monsieur Flandin. Everybody knew this, as people always do know everything in a country neighbourhood. They knew, too, that there was a slight hitch in the very beginning, owing to certain rather high-handed claims on Madame's part where Mademoiselle's fortune was concerned. But Monsieur Flandin was sure to yield; he desired too ardently to see his daughter wear a title to resist long. So, though no official information had been given, the neighbourhood already considered the engagement as good as settled.

These later days, when Effie, out of the boundless charity of her heart, had found it necessary to encourage Arthur during the pre-

liminaries of his coming sacrifice—their poetical name for his proposed marriage—she had not failed to impress upon him the necessity of great circumspection on the night of the ball. He was to be a good boy, and not enrage his mother by any neglect of Mademoiselle Flandin. The truth was, though I dare say she did not admit it to herself, Effie knew that she would be closely watched by old Madame and her gossips, and she had no mind to offend the grandees too deeply. Besides this, there would be a number of new men at the ball, and Effie's "friendship" for Arthur, strong as it was, did not prevent her feeling her usual eagerness to obtain a fair share of attention from the strangers.

But, carefully as she had explained to De Chantal what their respective *rôles* must be for this evening, the young man could not remain patient when he saw her waltzing and flirting with a certain handsome Parisian gallant, to the utter exclusion of what he had come to consider his own rightful claims.

He had done his duty by dancing with Mademoiselle Flandin; had stood for a few minutes near her chair and tried to talk; but they had no more to say to each other than French girls and unmarried men in general

find to talk about. Mathilde was shy by nature; shyer than ever with Arthur, as, of course, she understood perfectly well the arrangements proposed for them by their pastors and masters. Her little heart was well inclined toward her handsome *futur*, and she had of late been dreaming a good deal—in a small way, no doubt, for she had all her life been so hemmed in by rules and regulations that such germs of imagination as she possessed had found little opportunity to grow; but her fancies were pleasant to her, however tame and unsatisfactory they might have appeared to English or American damsels, accustomed to a wider range of thought.

She was too shy with De Chantal even to display to advantage such powers of conversation as she possessed; kept edging herself closer to her old aunt, who was enacting the part of *chaperon;* gave little nervous starts each time Arthur spoke; ventured upon no remark without an appealing glance at her relative to be sure she had said nothing wrong; and altogether was so *gauche* and school-girlish that Arthur, in his angry impatience, decided he was not, as he had supposed, simply indifferent to his future bride—he positively hated her—she was a downright idiot.

Mathilde certainly appeared ill, but he did her injustice; she was by no means silly. She had mind enough, and when life should allow her to think for herself she would think clearly and correctly, though perhaps her ideas would always run in a rather circumscribed channel from the effects of early education and a certain mistrust of her own powers.

But Arthur felt he had done his duty; between impatience of Mathilde's timidity and the constantly increasing irritation with which he watched Madame de Marsan's "free lance" operations, he could bear no more.

As soon as he could get near her again, he said,—

"I would have stopped at home if I had known this was what you meant! You have only danced once with me."

"What an impatient boy it is!" returned she. "My dear Arthur, do you suppose I am amusing myself? Between your mother and Monsieur de Marsan, I feel as if I was in the hands of the Inquisition. For both our sakes I do beg you to be careful and have patience."

"Then come and dance with me!"

"Not yet. Why, since our one valse, you have not danced—just stood glowering at me. You must not do it. Can you not trust to

my friendship, believe that I am actuated by a desire to serve your interests?"

"I don't care about my interests!" he said, crossly.

"Then, for my sake! You force me to tell you something which it hurts my pride, my womanly dignity to confess—my husband is jealous of you!"

So far Léon de Marsan heard, standing within the shadow of the window near which they sat. He turned and walked hastily away. He would have given worlds not to have been forced to hear even so much as he had heard.

From the opposite side of the room, he glanced back towards the pair. Effie was still speaking, with an affectation of indifference which Léon, who knew her so thoroughly, understood veiled an earnestness she could not venture to exhibit in that place. Then he saw De Chantal glance in his direction; saw a smile of triumph flit across the boy's mouth, which positively maddened him. He knew that, shallow as the youth was, he had just the sort of wit to enjoy a husband's sufferings, and Effie herself had uttered the revelations which gave him this power! Léon felt that his wife was utterly degraded; he knew she was inno-

cent of what society terms guilt; but, madly as he had loved her, suffer as he still must, from this night a new feeling sprang up in his soul which killed for ever the softness and leniency wherewith even in his anger he had been able to judge her actions.

I am making no attempt to describe to you Honour Pemberton's ball. The rooms were just comfortably filled—the scene a gay one—but I have to do with it only so far as certain events were concerned, which affected the little knot of people in whom I am trying to interest you.

Honour proved a charming hostess; she managed to be everywhere at once—to see that the elderly whist-players in the card-rooms had their favourite partners, that the young ladies danced, and the younger generation of men performed their duty.

Whatever he was doing, with whomsoever engaged, Monsieur de Vieuxville caught her every movement without appearing to watch. He had never seen her look so handsome as she did to-night. There was a new light in her eyes; a deeper tint in her cheeks; an appearance of thorough enjoyment and contentment which rendered her almost girlishly youthful.

"You have only danced once," he said,

approaching her as the orchestra was commencing one of Strauss's bewildering melodies.

"I have been too busy," she answered; "but it strikes me you have not been dancing, and without my excuse. By the way, I never saw you dance! What do you mean by neglecting your bounden duties in this manner?"

"May I beg this valse?" he asked.

There was the same light in his eyes—the same tender smile on his proud mouth—which had caused her heart to flutter as they stood alone in the boudoir. She answered, playfully,—

"I ought to refuse, since you have been so neglectful of my guests; but this is my favourite valse."

"And man needs a little encouragement before setting out on the path of duty," laughed he. "Give me this, and I promise to dance in succession with the three ugliest women in the room."

"There are no ugly women here," retorted she.

"I wonder if it is the atmosphere of your house which causes that phenomenon?" returned he, so jestingly, that Honour was not

obliged mentally to accuse him of what was odious to her—paying fulsome compliments. "Am I to have my valse?" he continued.

"Only on condition," laughed she. "If you fail to do your duty after, we shall have an awful reckoning to-morrow. I shall watch!"

"Ah, just that consciousness will support me—"

"Why, your ball-room manners are wonderfully fine," interrupted she, mockingly. "I did not know you could talk nonsense."

"You cannot be more surprised than I; but I believe lately I am discovering that I did not know myself in other ways."

Still they spoke laughingly, but there was that in his face which caused Honour's heart to flutter anew.

"I believe, after all, you do not mean to dance with me," said she. "I think I shall ask some more gallant cavalier to have pity on me. I'll not lose this delicious music."

In another instant they were floating down the room to the bewitching measure. Honour danced beautifully, and she thought she had never in her life found so good a partner. He held her perfectly—not restraining her in the least, just giving the necessary support; and his time was marvellous in its correctness.

They never stopped till the last bar was played.

"I would not have believed five minutes could have held so much keen happiness," he murmured.

Honour caught the words, though they were spoken so low that they might have been addressed to himself.

"Now secure a partner," she said: "the next will be the Lancers."

And he went without a word.

Honour chanced to find herself near Léon de Marsan. He was observing her rather curiously.

"Have you not been dancing?" she asked, going up to him, struck by the pallor of his face and the feverish light in his eyes.

"I was envying you," he said. "Is it possible a ball can make you so happy?"

"Don't be satirical and moody!" cried she. "One does not come to such places to stand off in a window and look misanthropical. Offer me your arm for a promenade. I want to introduce you to several of the new demoiselles: you must dance. Where is Effie? Oh, I see her. How lovely she looks to-night! She does not mope in corners, like you."

"She is quite able and willing to do duty

for both of us," he said, trying to laugh; but she saw a rapid frown of pain contract his eyebrows for an instant.

"Are you suffering to-night?" she asked, kindly. "I wanted you to enjoy yourself. I am in such good spirits myself, that I wish everybody else to be so too."

Effie's judicious statements in regard to her husband's causeless jealousy and shocking temper had caused Honour to feel but little sympathy with his moody attacks. She regarded them as a matter of temperament, against which he ought to struggle; and though she was lately beginning to see that Effie was not exactly the model wife she appeared to consider herself, she could not think there were any real grounds for the disfavour with which Léon regarded her manners toward other men. Effie had adroitly taken her friend into her confidence. There was no person Honour blamed so severely as a woman who talked against her husband; but Effie had spoken in a way which caused Mrs. Pemberton to forget she had complained—really to believe that her explanations arose from a desire to put Léon in the best light. Honour and De Marsan were excellent friends, but he had never opened his lips in regard to Effie. He

suffered—she knew that—he was suffering more than usual now, and she pitied him. In her new undefined sense of happiness she felt so charitable toward the whole world, that she longed to comfort him.

They walked up and down together for a few moments, then she insisted on his choosing a partner for the quadrille.

"You will work all the better to-morrow, if only you will put by everything but enjoying yourself," said she.

"What was that poem you were quoting the other day?" he asked. "Ah! I remember—

> 'You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave!
> Thou art a soul of bliss, but I am bound
> Upon a wheel of fire.'"

He uttered the words with a repressed passion which fairly startled her. In an instant he was laughing gaily; flashed suddenly into his wildest spirits; made himself the centre of a group near which their course up the room had led them; was so witty and gay, that Honour forgot everything about the quotation, except those words,—"Thou art a soul of bliss." She wondered, with a sort of shy terror, if it could be possible he suspected her secret—her secret which had only to-night

revealed itself to her — vaguely still, but clearly enough to make her heart bound with a rapture for which she would not try to account. Presently she chanced to be close to Effie for an instant.

"How kind you are!" whispered Madame de Marsan. "I saw you charming my wayward Léon into good spirits. I was almost sorry we had come, he went about so gloomy. I am sure he is suffering. If only I could persuade him to give up work! Between mental fatigue and bodily illness, his nerves are worn threadbare. I am so afraid, when we are out among strangers, he will show that strange irritability which prejudices people against him. I can bear anything but that— to have others misjudge him!"

"But he is very popular," Honour answered. "Lions are expected to be a little capricious and variable."

"Yes," sighed Effie. "My dear creature, when you fall in love, choose the most commonplace man of business you can find. I assure you, genius is fine on a pedestal, but we ordinary mortals are apt to get a little crushed when we have to live in the shadow of the place where it descends to walk about."

## CHAPTER VI.

### THEIR VOICES.

It was past twelve o'clock; the supper-room had opened, and the whole crowd flocked thither. The old banqueting-hall was superb with its carved ceilings, its wainscots, the faded tapestries which Honour had unearthed, and the supper—more important—perfection.

Effie de Marsan was eating sweet things and drinking champagne, rather neglecting the men about her for the time, because fate had brought her near Mademoiselle Flandin as she entered the room, and Effie had no mind to let pass any opportunity for cementing the friendship she proposed to form with that young lady.

"They are treading on my toes dreadfully," she said, laughing. "How frightfully carnivorous most of the elderly people look! Take care you are not eaten, Mademoiselle Mathilde. I am sure everything fresh and pretty is in danger, even to the humans."

And poor Mathilde thought her nonsense very witty, and was only too grateful to have Madame notice her, for the gentleman who led her in had managed to lose her *chaperon*, and Mathilde saw nobody near whom she knew well, so she was greatly relieved by Effie's appearance and good nature.

"I know you are tired of standing," said Madame; "let us edge our way out of this throng. Ah, here is an idle young man," she added. The course in which she was leading Mathilde brought them near Arthur de Chantal —as she had meant it to—reposing for an instant after the fatigues of finding food enough to satisfy the appetite of some old dowager who had captured him. "Monsieur de Chantal, take pity on two unfortunate females; our partners rushed into the press in search of eatables to sustain us after all the fatigues; they have never come out, and we fear they have perished."

"At least they will have the comfort of dying in the pursuance of duty," returned Arthur.

"Just so; all the same we wish to drink to their memory in champagne, and devour funeral baked meats in their honour," said Effie.

Mathilde could only giggle—she had not passed that stage—and gaze admiringly at Effie, clinging the closer to her because Arthur's neighbourhood fluttered her. The worst of it was, nervousness made her eyelids red, and her nose looked more like a button than ever, and her giggle was unendurable; and Arther hated her! There Effie stood, so cool and calm, so ready of speech, such a contrast in every way to the poor, pinched-looking heiresss, that, with a Frenchman's natural excitability, Arthur longed to tear his hair and utter melo-dramatic curses over the cruelty of destiny.

But he went off in search of food; came back accompanied by a servant bearing a tray laden with delicacies. He found them seats in a quiet nook, and a little table whereon to set the salver.

They had the merriest feast imaginable; Effie's satisfaction heightened by the fact that she could tell her conscience she was being kind to the young couple, and by her knowledge that Madame de Chantal was watching them from a distance with angry eyes, but fortunately so hemmed in that she could not interrupt their enjoyment, though the sight of it, Effie was certain, rendered her own repast dust and ashes on the old lady's palate.

Before supper ended, little Mathilde was so completely subjugated, that she felt Madame de Marsan the dearest friend she possessed in the world. In truth the young pair were placed for the time in a somewhat embarrassing position,—both aware that their respective parents were trying to bring about a marriage between them, and haggling over the terms; knowing, too, that the whole neighbourhood was cognizant of what was going on, though it pretended to be as ignorant as etiquette required the youthful couple to be that such matters were even dreamed of.

Effie's tact put them both at ease; she good-naturedly drew out Mathilde till the girl appeared at her best; even the unbecoming redness somewhat left her eyelids, so that Arthur could perceive the eyes themselves were rather pretty; and though he felt and told himself that he must always be miserable, he did not regard his probable bride as such a Gorgon in the bud as he had an hour before been inclined to consider her.

When affairs had reached this desirable pass, Madame de Marsan sent Arthur away for a moment on some errand, and thus gave herself an opportunity to gain still another step in the girl's confidence.

"I take liberties with Monsieur de Chantal," she said, laughingly; "he and my husband are such intimate friends that I know him quite well. My dear Mademoiselle Mathilde, I happen to know, through my husband, of certain little dreams and hopes on Monsieur Arthur's part which—but we must not talk of those things yet! Only, I hope you will be good enough to like my husband and me a little, and let us see you very often."

Mathilde got as red as a peony, and was fearfully embarrassed; but she liked Madame the better for what she had said, and even her limited imagination was able to construe Effie's words in a way which caused her to think that Arthur too was dreaming of this marriage, aside from the mercantile transaction their parents were making of it; and the idea rendered Mathilde very happy.

Effie did not pursue the subject: she would run no risk of wounding her listener's maidenly delicacy or shyness; she had said enough to prove that she was interested in them both, and she knew that, dull as she deemed Mathilde, the girl comprehended her meaning, and was prepared, in spite of old Madame de Chantal, to consider her an angel of goodness.

So altogether the ball was a charmed even-

ing to Mademoiselle Flandin—a good deal owing to Effie, if she had but known it, for after supper Arthur quite devoted himself to her (to his mother's rather too apparent delight), and put the *comble* to her happiness by informing her he should do himself the honour to ride over to the château and inquire after Monsieur Flandin's health—that estimable gentleman having been kept at home, greatly to his disgust, by an attack of gout as inopportune as it was sharp.

But it is not permitted to all mortals to find their anticipations in regard to pleasure so fully realized as the little heiress did hers, and on this occasion Monsieur Pellerin ranked among those unfortunates. He had arrived agreeably conscious that his new coat set without a wrinkle, that his necktie was faultless, and his general appearance far beyond the average standard. Honour had received him with pleasant smiles; the grandees had been civil; even appalling old Mademoiselle de Hauteville had condescended to be aware of his existence, and once positively allowed him to conduct her to the punch-room that she might moisten her formidable beak in a sublimated liquid, of which iced tea and maraschino composed the base, with a judicious mingling

of rum, strawberries, and tiny limes floating on the top to poetize and glorify the insidious compound.

Effie de Marsan danced with him—he had the satisfaction of leading the hostess through a quadrille; but even these gratifications, and added thereto the fact that his new shirt-buttons had cost more money than the necklaces of half the ladies, had not rendered the evening one of unalloyed delight.

No shrewder man lived than Antoine Pellerin was in many ways, and he saw clearly, what most people were too busy or too blind to notice, the terms on which Monsieur de Vieuxville had succeeded in placing himself with the young widow. Nothing escaped the sugar-maker's attention, even to the light in Honour's eyes and the colour in her cheeks when her valse with the Marquis had ended. Mayne had told him that she disliked her manager: Mayne must be either a liar or an idiot! But in truth a good many weeks had elapsed since Mayne offered this information, and during his absence Mrs. Pemberton had drifted unconsciously far away from the cool, critical stand-point whence she had for years prided herself on regarding mankind and its follies.

It was an aggravation also to Pellerin that

Monsieur de Vieuxville chose to be grandly courteous: in general he was almost as oblivious of that gentleman's existence as Mademoiselle de Hauteville herself. But to-night the Marquis had addressed him several times when they chanced to meet in the crowd, so bland, so unapproachable all the while, that Pellerin's blood boiled as fiercely as if the patrician indigo-tinted current of all the De Lestrelles de la Rivière positively coursed through his veins.

"Just as though he were in his own house—the beggar!—and must notice me. Acts as if I had got here by mistake—*sacr-r-é matin!*" thought Monsieur, in improper but forcible phrase.

The amiable Antoine had the pleasure of leading Mrs. Somers into the supper-room, so that, if he did not possess the rose, he was close to one of its supporters; and the old lady, exhilarated by champagne, chirped a good deal, principally about Honour, though she wandered off occasionally to more personal themes—advised him never to wear black velvet, because, though elegant, it was cumbersome, admired his shirt-buttons, and was surprised he could wear such tight shoes, and twice nearly put his left eye out with her belligerent ostrich-plume,

not to mention one onslaught therefrom which almost broke the end off his fiercely waxed moustache, and another which ruined his immaculate necktie. But even these confidences and sweet attentions of friendship did not console Pellerin, or help him to forget the bitterness of the suspicion which had risen in his mind. It might be that his ambitious hope of winning a high place in Madame Pemberton's regard was too bold; but to see, before he had made any running in the race, another man plainly occupying the position he coveted —and that other Armand de Vieuxville—was altogether too much for Pellerin's equanimity.

He saw Honour standing far off, near an open window, talking with several elderly gentleman, but he could not escape the robin in order to approach. De Vieuxville was not in sight—he found a slight comfort in this fact, and having imbibed a fair share of the insidious punch earlier, and assisted Mrs. Somers in her attack on the champagne-bottle, he felt in a sentimental mood, and remained watching the handsome hostess, sighing at intervals, and finding so many comparisons for her beauty, that he felt he had never properly appreciated his own talents.

Then suddenly the plume which decorated

Mrs. Somers's apex made its second assault upon his left visual organ. The feather was so vicious, that it really seemed as if it must originally have belonged to a bird of prey instead of an ostrich! For some seconds Pellerin could do nothing but rub his wounded eye, and curse in his heart the old robin who wore her borrowed plumage with such complacency, and was so beautifully unconscious of the evil tendencies it was displaying above her head.

When he could again see distinctly the width of the room, the elderly gentlemen, glasses in hand, were deep in some discussion. Mrs. Pemberton was leaning against the window-frame, evidently forgetful of the men and their talk, though she still kept up a pretence of listening. But Antoine Pellerin was physiognomist enough to be certain that her thoughts were worlds away—off, too, in some pleasant abode of dreams—to give her face that absent, half-wistful, half-eager expression.

He saw her move quickly; she turned and looked out into the moonlit night, as if some sudden noise had startled her. Then her countenance was visible again, but it had altered strangely—a mingling of emotions swept over it, in which he read anger and a wondering surprise,

as though she almost believed that her own senses had played her some trick.

He saw her glance at the trio of elderly gentlemen—they were too busy to notice. She looked about the room—everybody was absorbed, either in conversation or in the work of attending to the needs of their bodies. She was standing near the lower end of the apartment; she passed on toward the doors which led into the library, and disappeared. Monsieur Pellerin only waited to murmur some broken apology to Mrs. Somers, of which the old lady did not catch a syllable, and was left with the impression that he had been seized with colic, and always after used to harrow up his soul, when they met, by asking if he had recovered—then he made his way out into the corridor, and gained the library in his turn.

Pellerin had read Honour's face correctly, when, as he watched her, he decided that it expressed vague, pleasant dreaminess. Never in her whole life, she thought, had she spent so agreeable an evening. She would not allow herself to inquire into the causes of her contentment, but the consciousness thereof underlay all her reflections, and the very effort to keep aloof from that consciousness thrilled her with an excitement as agreeable as it was new.

Then across the reverie into which she was falling came the sound of a voice from without—another voice replying. Cold, stern expostulation from the first speaker; angry, passionate words from the second; and the voices were those of Gracieuse Galais and Monsieur de Vieuxville.

"Are you mad, to come here!" he said. "Go home at once! My God! if you should be seen!"

"Let me alone!" she cried. "Mad? Yes, I am mad! Let me alone! Go back to your ball—I don't interfere with you! If I choose to look in at you all—at you and your pleasure, like a ghost staring out of the dark—what is that to any of you? I harm nobody—let me alone."

For a second Honour could not stir; she felt as if some horrible nightmare held her in its clutch. It could not be real—she must be dreaming! Then she roused herself, and hurried away. What motive actuated her she could not exactly have told—whether she meant to confront them, to demand an explanation—her brain was in such a whirl she could not think.

Honour had been anxious to have Gracieuse come to the ball. It was to be so general an affair that she knew even Mademoiselle de

Hauteville herself would not resent the girl's presence. She wanted to give her little favourite this pleasure, to have Dr. Jean come also. She had talked with Monsieur Galais long in advance, and had obtained his consent that for once the rules he had laid down in regard to Gracieuse's intercourse with their employer should be broken.

Honour had even ventured, with the assistance of Céline, to arrange the prettiest simple white costume that ever delighted the eyes of a girl of eighteen unspoiled by luxury, and had exercised a vast deal of ingenuity in forming a plan for offering it without annoying her or seeming guilty of a liberty.

Somehow the night of the ball was close at hand before Honour could secure a visit from Gracieuse. It did not occur to her that of late the girl had deliberately avoided her; she only thought her greatly occupied between duties, care of her father, and the agreeable interest brought into her quiet life by Chegary's visit.

But she succeeded in capturing Gracieuse one day, took her to the château, unfolded her plans, and met with a downright refusal. If such a thing had been possible, Honour would have thought her offended. But in a moment she was uttering eager excuses, foremost among

them, that very natural one for a girl of her age—she had no dress. Then Honour kissed her, never noticing, quick as her intuitions usually were, how Gracieuse shrank from her caress; called her a wee darling birdie, and produced the dainty costume, with rapidly uttered excuses that she had ventured to have it prepared because she knew her little friend was always busy. Gracieuse must accept it, just to show that Honour's love for her was returned. She must come to the ball, she and Dr. Jean; and it was to be an evening of such unalloyed delight to all of them as they should never forget.

And Gracieuse would not even look at the dress, perhaps fearing that her fortitude might yield before that potent temptation. She astounded Honour by bursting into tears, by broken words at once apologetic and passionate, and finally pleaded so earnestly to be allowed to return home, that Honour had to release her. She was quite conscience-stricken for fear she had in some way blundered, had hurt Gracieuse's pride by the offer of the dress; and asked herself if it was possible that wealth and power had unconsciously deteriorated her nature, until she was capable of that most unpardonable coarseness, patronage and pomposity.

She talked with Chegary about the matter; but he could only tell her that Gracieuse was firmly determined not to go to the ball. Whether she was afraid the great people would look down upon her—whether she dreaded to disturb her life by such unwonted excitement—neither her father nor he could tell. One thing was certain—any attempt at persuasion distressed her so much that they had decided to say no more. Patient Doctor Jean did not add that, so far as he was concerned, anger had as much share as pain in Gracieuse's emotion, and she had turned upon him with sundry reproofs in regard to the propriety of minding his own business, contempt of his snobbishness in wishing to become a hanger-on of grand folk, uttered with such southern fire and energy, that poor Jean, unaccustomed to the bitterness of tongue which the gentlest of the sex can display on occasion, retired with a feeling of positive guilt, his ears tingling as if the blows she dealt had been physical.

The library-windows gave upon a terrace, from which steps led down into the old-fashioned pleasaunce. By the time Honour reached the terrace she had recovered enough from her astonishment to ask herself why she had come, what she proposed to do, and was trying to

offer rapid explanations to her reason. Gracieuse might have felt a girlish longing to catch a glimpse of the brilliant scene, and had stolen up through the park and entered the pleasaunce, believing that the shadow of the trees would hide her from observation; and De Vieuxville— But then came the recollection of the words she had caught—no ordinary remark, such as any man might have uttered in regard to her imprudence in standing out in the night air, but a reproof full of stern displeasure, answered by words of such passion and pain as could only be wrung from a woman suffering horrible agony.

Before her thoughts could go further, Honour heard the voices again—three this time. Looking down, she could see by the light of the moon, which dimly penetrated the branches of the old oaks, three figures standing just below the terrace.

"It is nobody's business!" Gracieuse said.

"I feared that your cousin might take cold," De Vieuxville added.

Then Doctor Jean's tones, shaken out of their ordinary calm by mingled anger and distress, which he strove vainly to subdue, —

"We need not detain you, Monsieur. I am quite able to take care of my cousin. As for

reproof, if any were necessary, it would be her father's duty to offer it, not yours or mine."

"I want to go home, Jean. Take me home!" cried Gracieuse; and her voice was sharp with a sudden terror, as if a dread of an altercation between the two men had struck her.

Honour turned to enter the house. She wanted to hear no more. Her mood had changed; she wished to believe that the two cousins had come together. Gracieuse's wild words meant nothing; she was a complete southern—capricious, undisciplined.

So far she reached in her thoughts, looked up, and saw Monsieur Pellerin standing in the open window.

"It is a beautiful night," he said. "I found the supper-room so warm that I stole out here for a breath of air. I had no idea any one was following my example."

"Have you just come?" she asked, before she knew what she was saying.

"Oh no," he replied, smoothly; "I was at the further end of the terrace. I did not recognize you till now, as your back was toward me."

Honour's first thought—and it spoke volumes for the nobility of her nature—was of Gra-

cieuse, and the possible injury which might arise to the girl had any careless or malicious-tongued person heard the words which reached her in the supper-room. If Monsieur Pellerin had been here all the while, he must have caught much more of the conversation than she, as she had lost some moments in gaining the terrace.

"I heard voices," she said, as unconcernedly as she could manage to speak.

"Yes," he replied; "those of Mademoiselle Galais and your manager."

"And Doctor Chegary's," she added, quickly. "I suppose he and his cousin were out for a moonlight ramble."

She quite forgot that in France young women do not indulge in moonlight rambles, even with cousins; but a little laugh from Pellerin reminded her that her attempted excuse only aggravated Gracieuse's imprudence. It was a relief to be angry with somebody. Honour felt terribly vexed with Monsieur Pellerin, and regretted heartily having been deluded into giving him an invitation to the ball.

"I was not aware that I had said anything amusing," said she, coldly.

"I beg your pardon," returned he; "I don't

know why I laughed. God knows I am not in a laughing mood! Madame, Doctor Chegary has taken his cousin away; but he did not bring her here. I am almost a stranger to you. I wish I knew you better. There are many things I should like to say. Perhaps this sounds impertinent. I am a plain, blunt man, but I trust I am an honourable one. At least be certain of this, what I have seen and heard to-night will never be told to any human being. I am sorry I was here. You are angry with me for what is no fault of mine. I beg you to believe that my esteem for that old father, my pity for that unfortunate girl, will keep me silent."

He said it all very rapidly, and he said it well. His closing words struck Honour's heart like a blow from a hand of ice. She could ask no questions. The man, as he himself stated, was almost a stranger. She could only trust to his honourable instincts, and he had spoken with the fervour of a person uttering the truth.

"I hope I was not rude," she said. "I am very fond of Gracieuse. I—her coming here was just a childish freak, it—"

She was only making matters worse by her hesitating speech. She was furious with her-

self for her stupidity, but somehow a sudden cold ache—was it in brain or heart?—rendered her dull. She wanted at once to convince him that the scene meant nothing, and yet to impress upon his mind the necessity for silence; and it was difficult, since the doing this must show that the affair had its importance.

"I shall not remember what I have seen, since you wish me to forget," he said. "Madame, do believe that I am honest and truthful!"

"I do," she answered, "and I thank you." It was useless to invent excuses, to try for subterfuges; every word he spoke showed this. She felt tired and weak, beset by a longing to escape the whole world, most of all herself. "I must go in," she added.

He bowed, stood back for her to pass, walked on beside her through the library without even offering his arm. Somehow he managed to show that his reserve proceeded from a certain proud humility. Even in the midst of her confused feelings Honour noticed this, and was ready to think she had at first misjudged the man; but, oh, after to-night, could she ever trust her own intuitions again? —fool! idiot!

But they were close to the supper-room; people were pouring out; a crowd surrounded her. She was in the midst of a *fête* where she was hostess. Her soul might be in arms, and her brain on fire; there was no time to heed either now.

The gayest ball, everybody said, that Normandy had known for years—the equal of which must not be expected for years to come. Certainly it would be long before Honour Pemberton could forget it!

It was broad daylight before even staid elderly people thought of going home. There had been a cotillon, which Mayne led, wherein he introduced so many fantastic and quaint figures that the on-lookers forgot how long it lasted, and the dancers could have whirled about for ever.

But it was over at length: the latest lingering revellers had gone: the persons who had been guests in the house had returned to Paris by the special train provided for the convenience of the flock of gay people from the capital.

Honour saw the last group depart with feelings of profound thankfulness—but even then she was not allowed to get to her room in peace. Aurora — Mrs. Pemberton's private

domestic goddess—suddenly stopped on her way upstairs, to shriek in the agonies of nervous toothache, and for another good hour Honour was forced to attend to her.

She reached her apartments; sent Céline to bed; undressed and lay down, in the vain hope that physical fatigue would sufficiently overpower her mental faculties, so that she should fall asleep.

## CHAPTER VII.

### MATHIEU'S MISHAP.

I OFTEN think that one of the cruellest characteristics of Fate is her love of strong contrasts. She is seldom content to force us into playing the principal actors in a tragedy, without mixing so much that is petty or grotesquely comical with our *rôles*, that we have not even the poor satisfaction of feeling that our suffering has at least a dignity in its awful completeness.

Manette was the name of the ancient body who performed the whole service of Monsieur Galais's little household (in the stiffest captower and the most aggressive *sabots* that ever even a Norman peasant sported), and fulfilled her duties, too, with such accuracy, seeming to be everywhere and doing everything at once. Her master often said she made his head so dizzy, he felt as if he possessed six Manettes instead of one, till, in the strength of the illusion, he sometimes caught himself wondering, in

an addled fashion, what insanity could have prompted him to hire so many domestics, and how his narrow purse was ever to find means for requiting their efforts. This worthy creature cherished a husband who owned a wooden leg—the most obstinate wooden leg ever invented—always sticking fast in the garden-beds, among which his duties lay, or tripping him up when he forced it to move quicker than it liked—taking its revenge by toppling him flat on his back, where he would be forced to lie, like a corpulent beetle, till Manette rushed to the rescue, with objurgations very equally divided between him and his tormentor.

Old Mathieu possessed a wig, too; the fuzziest, foxiest, woolliest wig ever formed out of human hair, and it either inherited evil dispositions from the head on which it had originally grown, else it had become corrupted by the wicked example of the wooden leg, for it was to the full as malicious as the leg itself. It never would stay straight on poor old Mathieu's head; it was for ever getting a drunken twist, or a crazy twist, or flying off from its abiding-place at the most inopportune moments, such as when Mathieu was making his best bow to visitors come to see that pride of his heart, the garden, or when Mathieu

was at work, and flung his hat aside for air. Then a tacit compact to plague him would seem to be formed between the wig and the leg; the wig would fly off, and force Mathieu to pursue it, and the leg would trip him up, leaving him helplessly to stare after the diabolical wig, which would hop about like some monster of a bird, just keeping out of reach and dancing the harder the more he upbraided it. But, on the whole, Mathieu was very patient with his persecutors: except for those occasional wordy outbursts on his part, they would have gone unpunished, had it not been for Manette. It was her duty to unstrap the leg at night and lay it on a table, and she used to bang it and beat it, and call it awful names, till often Mathieu felt sorry for it, and begged her to be merciful, inspired by an odd sensation that somehow the heathenish member was a portion of his own body, and he could not bear to have it hurt.

Of a Sunday morning, too, it was Manette's custom to comb and brush the wig, and then it was obliged to atone for all its sins of the past week, and she would pull and maltreat it, till poor Mathieu's head fairly ached from sympathy, and he would plead in its behalf likewise; but Manette was not to be softened, for

however much she might tyrannize over her Mathieu in a small way, she was fond of him, and had no mind to see him tormented by two such specimens of total depravity as the leg and the wig. The oddest thing was that neither of the crack-pated old pair would have dreamed of exchanging these belongings for better-conducted objects of a similar kind. They were part and parcel of Mathieu, as much as if they had sprouted out of his body, and so must be endured only; occasionally Mathieu felt it a little hard that Manette should be indiscriminating in her wrath when his appeals for help in some scrape into which they had dragged him called her forth from her soup-pot or her *ragoûts* at critical moments. At such times she included him in the abuse lavished on their wickedness, as if they had been private sins he clung to blindly, in spite of her efforts to eradicate them and bring him back to the paths of virtue.

The morning after Honour Pemberton's ball, Gracieuse had risen early and gone downstairs into the pretty little *salle à manger* where the coffee and tempting white rolls were always served. She dreaded inexpressibly to meet Jean, but it would be better to do it and have the first suffering over; easier also to have

the meeting take place in her father's presence.

She looked at herself in the glass while dressing, and wondered that her face could be so little altered by the suffering of the night. She had almost expected to find her curling locks white, and her forehead seamed with wrinkles, but there was no show of trouble for which a headache would not account. Her cheeks had lost their colour, her rosebud of a mouth was drawn and pinched, her soft, child-like eyes had a weary, dilated expression, half of terror, half of pain—but that was all the change.

Now she must endure her father's anxiety if he noticed her appearance; Jean's condemnatory glances, at once sorrowful and scornful, to mark his consciousness of the petty lies wherewith she must reply to her father's inquiries. But anything was easier to bear than solitude. The wild thoughts which suffering had brought during the darkness had left her positively afraid of herself—that self which had so altered from the girl she had known a year back, that she was frightened of it as if it had been a stranger.

Woman-like, she was even more scrupulous than usual about her toilette; not a ringlet

must be out of place, not a fold of her fresh muslin dress awry. She hunted in her drawers for a new sash to tie about her waist, and was as solicitous over the bow as if her whole soul were absorbed in the task. All the while she hated herself that she could think or care how she looked, and cried out that she was the meanest, vainest creature alive—sought to find consolation by remembering that which was the truth—that she did it all for her father's sake, lest some hint of her pain should strike him; then her very attempt at self-consolation turned into an added pang, and she shuddered over her own wickedness and duplicity.

She had risen almost at break of day; but the toilette was a long process, often interrupted by brief tempests of agony, and it was not much before her customary hour when she went downstairs.

She found the dining-room empty; the short reprieve was at once a comfort and a pain. She was afraid of both cousin and father, but more afraid of her own thoughts.

The glass doors which gave upon the garden were open. She was roused from her dismal reverie by Mathieu's voice, in loud appeal to his spouse. Then she heard Manette's *sabots* clattering down the gravelled path; her cracked

tones rising to a pitch which drowned poor Mathieu's complaints, and were only equalled in sharpness by the frantic barks of Gracieuse's little spaniel, who seemed to be in the height of the fray, and to find intense enjoyment therein.

The sounds were too common to alarm her; she knew that Mathieu's tormentors had been seized with a matutinal desire for a wicked frolic at the old man's expense. She crossed the room mechanically, and went out on the narrow lawn which stretched between the house and garden.

Mathieu had been standing with his fleshly leg upon a mound of earth, the wooden demon planted on the level ground, while he was trying to reach the branches of a young tree with a hooked stick, in order to tie certain refractory boughs, so that they might not grow crooked and deformed.

There had been a shower just before daylight, brief but heavy; the ground was still wet and soft; that diabolical wooden leg had taken advantage of this circumstance, when Mathieu unguardedly cast too much of his weight upon it, to sink deeper and deeper, till it was imbedded nearly to the knee in the damp mould. It flung Mathieu out of the

perpendicular, leaving his well-disposed human member in the air at an acute angle, while it held him so firmly that he could not fall. With his uplifted hands he still grasped the hooked stick, afraid to let it go, though his weakened hold had allowed the branches to sway up, so that he was balanced back and forth, with no gentle oscillation. His hat had fallen off; the demoniac wig seized this opportunity to play its part. There was a fresh breeze blowing, and it bobbed up and down, ran hither and hither, performed eccentric circles; while Dust, the spaniel, chased it with frantic glee, and Mathieu moaned, and Manette tugged at the wooden limb, execrating it, the wig, and Mathieu with all her might and main.

"Thou and thy accursed leg of wood!" she cried. "Couldst thou not be content with a respectable crutch, like a Christian, instead of desiring this enormity to plague the world?" Then to the leg,—"Come out—fiend—brigand—head of a radish—come out, or I'll break thee into splinters!"

But the leg would not be stirred a jot; the more Mathieu struggled and Manette tugged, the firmer it kept its hold; and the wig suddenly danced at Manette in such a horribly living, menacing way, that she cried,—

"I believe thou art alive! Did ever a man consent to own such a thing before! Ugh, you ugly toad!—come within reach, and I will trample thee well! Oh, you stupid old Mathieu, to plant yourself here like a cabbage with its head in the air, as if you thought that accursed wooden thing would sprout!"

Then a new idea seized her; she left the leg to its own devices; rushed to the other side; seized the flesh-and-blood limb, which was dangling helplessly in the air, as if it, instead of the wooden one, were the insensate member, and pulled vigorously thereupon, shouting all the while, regardless of Mathieu's howls.

Manette tugged—Mathieu moaned—the wig danced—the little dog turned summersaults of delight, but the wooden leg never budged.

Suddenly the straps which fastened it to Mathieu's hip gave way, taking Manette so completely off her guard that she fell flat on the ground; Mathieu fell across her, while the wooden leg erected itself in the air like a flagstaff; the wig suddenly bounced at the little dog, landed with such accuracy on his head that it blinded him, and he added his howls of fright to Manette's cries of wrath and Mathieu's groans.

Five minutes before, Gracieuse had thought

she should never laugh again in this world. She could remember the time, such a little way back (though it looked so distant to her youthful eyes new to suffering), when she had felt an innocent pride in that girlish laugh of hers, which she had been told was so sweet and cheering. But the absurd spectacle in the garden made her laugh, her very horror of her own ability adding an hysterical force to her merriment.

Sitting in his room overhead, Doctor Jean heard those ringing tones, and they thrilled him with mingled surprise and irritation. He had not even attempted the pretence of going to bed that night, and, after bathing and changing his dress, was waiting there in his chamber—just because, for her own sake, he dreaded to meet Gracieuse (his personal pain, terrible as it was, he could bear, but not her humiliation)—when he was roused by that burst of girlish laughter from the garden. In his absorption he had not caught an echo of the din which preceded; but he heard her voice, and wondered if it were possible he had dreamed the events of the past night, since she could laugh like that.

He rose and leaned out of the window, caught sight of the ridiculous tableau, and

laughed too—as heartily as Gracieuse had done. But the sound of his mirth—echoing down from the embrasure of the casement, whose embowering sprays of sweet-briar, wet by the early rain, bedewed his forehead with a cool baptism which, even in his mirth, rendered the inward fever and pain more galling—checked Gracieuse's voice suddenly, and sent her back into the house indignant with him, that he could dare to laugh like that within her hearing after last night—last night!

But Fate, in her oddities—perhaps, though, they arise from a desire to distract us in any way from our poor human miseries, instead of a fiendish delight in degrading our tragedies by a touch of farcical grotesqueness—had not yet finished the low-comedy scene wherewith it pleased her to commence the young people's day, after the culminating act of suffering of which the past evening had been the theatre.

Manette had chosen this occasion to commit one of her rare blunders; she had brushed the coats of the two gentlemen, carried Doctor Jean's blue *veston* into her master's room, and laid Monsieur Galais's old-fashioned, snuff-coloured frock, with its preposterous skirts, carefully folded on a chair outside Chegary's door.

In his quiet fashion the old gentleman had a great appreciation of a joke; he saw the mistake, deliberately put on the blue sack coat, with its wide sleeves and jaunty look, which gave him somehow an air at once sanctimonious and improper, whereat he laughed heartily, and went downstairs. He entered the dining-room from the hall at the same instant Doctor Jean, who had gone out into the air for a moment after descending to the lower floor, appeared through the glass doors, beautifully unconscious, in his abstraction, that he had indued himself in the brown frock, and had a good deal the appearance of a gipsy trying to disguise himself in the garb of an itinerant preacher.

Gracieuse saw them both at the same instant, and nearly had hysterics. Doctor Jean saw his uncle, and shrieked. Galais shrieked, because he was sure Jean did not in the least realize what his own plight was; and Manette appearing from the kitchen, coffee-pot in hand, red and heated after her exertions in the garden, unaware that her tall head-dress was as much out of the perpendicular as the tower of Pisa, paused on the threshold to shriek likewise.

For some seconds a spectator might have

thought the four under the influence of laughing-gas. When Doctor Jean was made to look at himself in the glass over the mantel (an old Philistine of a glass which always distorted and traduced people even when arrayed in their best) the jest reached its climax.

The coffee was nearly cold before anybody had recovered an approach to composure, and then Manette set the others off again, for she became suddenly grave enough to scold. This indulgence called attention to the state of her head-gear, which was sufficiently ludicrous to convulse her and the rest anew when Gracieuse compelled her to follow Doctor Jean in that self-inspection in the mirror.

Altogether, Gracieuse was relieved from any troublesome questions on her father's part. Coffee was drunk, and she escaped before Chegary had leisure to trouble her by so much as a pitying or reproving glance.

It was Jean's last day, and it had been previously decided that neither Gracieuse nor Monsieur Galais were to disturb themselves by a thought of the counting-house. Gracieuse would rather have muddled her brain with the longest rows of figures and the most heartless sums ever invented than spend those hours in idleness, exposed to the scrutiny of her two

relatives, but there was no help. With feminine ingenuity she did contrive sundry excuses for having a portion of the morning free from their observation, but it was only by a few moments at a time; her father was constantly calling after her, and once, when Manette unluckily heard her offer a plea for absence, based on the necessity of aiding the old woman by the composition of an omelette for the twelve o'clock breakfast, Manette thwarted her device by putting her head in at the *salon* door to state generally that mademoiselle could no more make an omelette than she could build a pyramid!

If anybody—*anybody* (Manette, having forgotten her laughter, had gone back to the ruffled mood in which the wicked performances of the leg and wig always threw her, and repeated the impersonal pronoun with menacing emphasis), at this late day, suspected her powers—dreaded a failure thereof—she had only to say that the sooner she was sent to the hospital to die the better. There would not be far to go. There was Madame Pemberton's fine new building only waiting for an occupant. She, Manette, was quite ready to inaugurate one bed or a dozen—in fact, she should only be too glad. If she had lived to have her ability

of contriving a proper *déjeûner*,—ay, and her ability to carry out her own artistic conception,—doubted, then she had indeed lived too long; and the sooner Madame Pemberton's assistants put her out of the way by their new-fangled rules and remedies—which were certain to be speedy death to any victim submitted to their mercies—the greater would be her satisfaction.

After this outburst she shook her tower at each of the appalled trio in turn, and disappeared, banging the door behind her. But her passion served Gracieuse as a loophole of escape after all. She was obliged to go and soothe the faithful old woman into a reasonable mood. Apparently the task proved difficult, for Gracieuse did not reappear till breakfast was on the table, though Manette knew, what the two gentlemen did not, that her young mistress had never come near her for an instant.

It was she who after *déjeûner* made overtures of peace, and begged Gracieuse to excuse her conduct to Monsieur and Doctor Jean, and assure them that nothing except the misery she suffered from Mathieu's abandoned wooden leg and diabolical wig could ever have induced her to forget herself as she had done.

But Fate had no intention of letting Gra-

cieuse off so easily as the girl began to hope she might do. Doctor Jean was to depart by the eight o'clock train; father and daughter were to drive with him to the station. Poor old Monsieur Galais was in an anxious frame of mind; he could not be sure whether any distinct explanation had been arrived at by Doctor Jean with Gracieuse. He could not ask; could only marvel whether there were difficulties of which he ought to be made aware, or whether in his shyness—being a man, Monsieur Galais could appreciate the feeling in another man (as women with all their delicacy would have failed to do)—Doctor Jean preferred to wait until after his departure and put his proposal for Gracieuse's hand in the form of a letter addressed to her father.

Dear old Monsieur! He rather thought the restraint between them which he perceived was owing to the fact that they had agreed to keep their pretty secret until Jean had gone. He was not hurt or selfishly jealous, as many parents would have been,—he only wished he could get quietly out of the way and leave them to themselves; but, each time he tried, Gracieuse found means to keep him, her very fear of being left with her cousin standing her instead of feminine acuteness to find reasons—

acuteness which was so deadened by the pain in heart and head that she felt as dull and helpless as a stone.

So since Monsieur did not succeed in his good intentions—they oftener give us reason, when we suffer, to curse our friends than our enemies—Fate, as I said, took the business in her own hands, and, however too much a match woman may prove for us blundering males, even she meets her conqueror there—I suppose the reason why the relentless deity bears a female appellation. Man felt that no masculine power could circumvent his other half, and so conceived the idea that Fate must be feminine.

Poor Monsieur Galais was seized with one of his attacks of pain, and forced to go to bed. The gentle old man would not have admitted the truth to his own soul, but the idea of Jean's departure, and the anxiety he felt in regard to the relations between the two young people, alone produced the *crise*.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THEIR PARTING.

Gracieuse could not escape the dreaded *tête-à-tête* with her cousin. But, like most evils, it had been worse in anticipation than it proved in reality. Dr. Jean talked upon every subject under heaven, except that which filled his mind and hers.

On the previous night the two had walked home almost in silence. Even in the height of the pain, wrath, and vague terror caused by the wild words he had overheard from Gracieuse's lips when speaking to Monsieur de Vieuxville, Chegary was too skilful a physician not to know that to torture her with questions, in her then state of excitement, would be cruel, perhaps fairly dangerous. He could only try to soothe her by carefully chosen expressions of sympathy, and bid her remember that, if she was in any trouble or anxiety, she had always a relative ready to assist her in every possible way.

She did not answer; she turned impatiently from him, and hurried on. He could see her white, agitated face in the moonbeams, and knew that it might not be so much impatience which kept her silent, as a fear that her pain and excitement should culminate in a hysterical outburst which would take away her last possibility of self-control.

Dr. Jean had spent the saddest, dreariest night his experience had ever brought. But the result of his meditations left him little comfort, nor had they made it plain to him what it might be in his power to do. One thing was certain—he could not help Gracieuse against her will; if he attempted to walk in the dark, he should risk doing irreparable harm instead of good.

At one time during his vigil, he had thought the way simple enough. To seek De Vieuxville—demand by what right he had ventured to reprove Gracieuse—tear his heart out—kill him like a dog! But when his clear, sensible mind could act enough to subdue his passion and that wild impulse of his southern blood—new to Dr. Jean, for his quiet, unexciting life had never before brought him face to face with such possibilities in his own nature—he realized that a

quarrel with the man must ruin his cousin irrevocably.

It was all so black, so inexplicable! To believe evil of Gracieuse? No, no! even in the height of his wrath he could not do that! But to leave her oppressed by trouble seemed impossible. Once he thought of Honour Pemberton. She had heard the words Gracieuse was speaking when he approached the place where the girl stood with De Vieuxville. Dr. Jean had caught sight of her face (though neither of the others had), as she leaned over the window-sill of the supper-room, and he knew that she had heard. She was a good, true, real woman—Chegary felt that—could he apply to her? The answer came, quick and decided,—"No!" Jean Chegary, unaccustomed as he was to the world, had, in the course of his profession, gained a knowledge of human nature, which had long since left clear to him what had been a secret to Honour herself: she loved De Vieuxville. Dr. Jean knew another thing: a woman who loves is not merciful toward another woman. He judged Honour by that rule; he erred; but, after all, even with her there might, under certain circumstances, have been a degree of truth in the application of his creed.

In the meanwhile the afternoon was passing, and he had done nothing, not even said a word to Gracieuse which might be a comfort hereafter in her solitude, since it would remind her that whatever happened (the very vagueness with which he put the phrase in his own thoughts made him shiver) she had always one friend ready to serve her to the furthest extremity.

The cousins dined alone, for Monsieur Galais found it impossible to rise. The pain had passed, but he was tired and weak—laziness was the name he gave to his fatigue when Gracieuse came in to inquire if he felt able to get up for dinner.

"Manette shall bring me a *bouillon*," he said, "and I will doze a little while you and Jean dine. I am sure you can entertain him for once."

He tried to speak laughingly, but the tender way in which he patted her hand as it lay on the counterpane, the piteous eagerness in his kind old eyes, at once pained and irritated Gracieuse, for she knew what it all meant—a hope that when Jean came to bid him good-bye, he should hear that the one wish left him in this life was certain to be fulfilled. But he said no more, and Gracieuse went

away to her task of entertaining her cousin.

They talked quietly for some time, Jean managing to perform his part with tolerable grace; but each time he glanced at the clock, and remembered how swiftly the hours were flying away, his very heart seemed to stop beating.

At last he proposed to Gracieuse that, as her father was not well enough to drive to the station, old Mathieu should be sent with the luggage, while they two walked. They could strike across the Vieuxville park by a path Gracieuse had already taken him, skirt the forest beyond, go through some fields, and come out at the village of Sainton, where Mathieu would wait for them with the horse and carriage.

No reasonable excuse offered for refusing this proposition, so Gracieuse was forced to accept. While she was gone upstairs to prepare herself, Doctor Jean went into his uncle's room to say good-bye. He made the farewells as brief as possible. The old man did not question him, but the anxious look in his eyes was an added pain to Chegary.

"I shall write you a long letter as soon as I reach home," he said; "somehow it is easier to explain things on paper."

Monsieur Galais seized upon these words as a confirmation of his idea that the youthful pair wished to keep their secret for a little longer, and was content, allowing Jean to depart with a cheerfulness which astonished himself.

So the two cousins walked through the leafy glades of the park amid the brightness of the gathering sunset. The readiness with which Jean had all the afternoon yielded to her efforts to keep their conversation down to ordinary topics finished by giving Gracieuse courage; she began to hope that she might escape explanation. She tried to talk lightly; to appear like her ordinary self; to jest and laugh. The pretence was so poor that the very suffering her efforts caused him nerved Chegary to the task which his conscience told him must be fulfilled.

He stopped short in the path, and cried, suddenly,—

"I cannot endure it, Gracieuse! I cannot go away and leave you like this! For God's sake, have confidence in me! Tell me everything: let me help you in your trouble!"

The moment so carefully warded off had come at last! Gracieuse grew bold from very

desperation. Her woman's quick perceptions showed her that Jean was terribly afraid of offending her, and, with a woman's craft, she tried to turn the fear to her advantage by a semblance of anger. "My trouble?" she asked, haughtily. "I don't know what you mean, cousin Jean—I have none."

"Gracieuse, Gracieuse!"

The piteous entreaty in his tone went to her heart like a knife; the pleading sympathy in his eyes shook her very soul; but she steeled herself against both, looked him full in the face, and repeated,—

"I don't know what you mean."

For an instant he was angry.

"Do you think I am blind, or a fool?" he cried.

"I think we shall quarrel if you speak to me like this," she answered, coldly; then added, in a softer tone, "you would not like to do that when you are going away; be a good Jean—a dear Jean!"

Another attempt at the old playful manner—so poor, so apparent, that it dissipated his momentary wrath.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "No, no; we will not quarrel, but—"

"There, there, dear Jean! Don't let us be

serious; forget that we have to separate. I hate tragic things."

"I cannot go until I have spoken," he said, resolutely.

"Then speak!" she cried, and the passion with which she turned upon him was real enough. The necessity for guarding her secret, the anguish which wrung her heart, gave her the kind of strength and self-control which a person on the verge of insanity will sometimes show. "You are daring to think ill of me. I saw it last night. I have seen it all day! Shame on you! shame on you! Say it all out now, and be done! What is it you think? What is it you mean? Let me hear, Jean Chegary."

"My God! Gracieuse, is this you?" he asked, in a hoarse, choked voice.

She stood there white as death, her eyes blazing like coals of fire, her hands clenched, face and attitude so full of desperation and resolve, with a strange terror visible under both, yet only affecting her in so far that it rendered her more desperate, that Jean Chegary felt almost as if confronted by some despairing phantom that had stolen the bodily likeness of the creature he had so fondly loved.

"Never mind about me!" she exclaimed,

able, nearly mad as she was—or rather finding the ability in the very strength of that half-insanity—to follow up the advantage she had gained. "It is you who are in question now! I want to know what it is I have read in your face all day? I want to know what it is you suspect me of? Don't stop because I am a girl. If you can think evil of a girl, and she the child of your mother's own sister, put it into words and be done!"

"Gracieuse, Gracieuse!"

"Be still! You think because I went out of the house last night—because—ah, wait! You followed me, did you? Spied—watched—thought I had a secret, and wanted to get at the bottom of it! Oh, you coward! If I knew a worse name to call you by, I'd do it. There is only one can express your degradation and your meanness—oh, you *man!*"

And there happened what has always happened when a woman seizes that ground—what always will happen when an honest man loves, and the woman under whose feet he has flung his heart finds a reason—a reason born out of the necessity, not to save herself, but to save a man she loves—for humiliating him who has had only his heart to give, and has given it in vain.

Jean Chegary—who hitherto had never committed an action for which he had been forced to blush before the scrutiny of his own soul—who had believed that no power under high heaven could induce him to relinquish one iota of the dignity and manliness which made life worth possessing—was guilty of the weakness which any man whose heart could speak (and the man whose heart cannot is an intellectual monster) would have committed—committed just for the woman's sake, because he could bear his own humiliation but could not endure hers.

He fell on his knees at Gracieuse Galais's feet, crying,—

"If these were my last words—if I had to go into the next world with them on my lips—I swear it is not true!"

Every best impulse of her nature was shaken to its depths—she was a true woman, and could appreciate his nobility—could feel to its fullest extent her own duplicity, and loathe and hate herself therefor, but all the while the image of the man she loved rose between her and the one at her feet—the perils which surrounded her lover—the onus placed upon her by the exigencies of the moment—the horrible consequences which might ensue if she lost control, by so

much as a hair's breadth, of her self-possession—all these considerations so completely numbed every other feeling, that she had no more pity for Jean Chegary than she had for herself.

"Get up!" was all she said, turning partially away as she spoke, with a gesture, half scorn, half indifference, of which only a woman would have been capable. "Get up! I don't want you there at my feet. I want you to look in my face and tell me what it is you have dared to believe. Tell me, if you can invent a reason—you men are dull—for watching, spying, searching, hunting, hoping to find that some blessed chance might place me in your power!"

The horrible sentences dropped out slowly—hesitatingly—pelted like tiny red-hot cannon-balls on the bare heart of her listener.

He was on his feet; he caught her two hands in his—he was holding them fast; his eyes blazed into hers with a fire which scorched her very soul.

"God forgive you!" was all he said; "I am very sorry for you, Gracieuse Galais."

He dropped her hands; he was frightened of himself. The dreadful impulse which had struck his soul, to murder her then and there, passed as quickly as it came, and left him

horrified, amazed, overpowered, as it could only have done a man whose life had, up to this crisis, been so quiet, so controlled, so bound down by the common laws and common chances of existence, that he had never dreamed his nature held those capabilities of passion which make all men, from the hero to the criminal, akin.

He dropped her hands and turned away. She could not let him go—she would not have been a woman if she could! In some way she must right herself: she had gained the upper hand—she had put him in the wrong; she had swept the man she loved and meant to save so far beyond possibility of question or thought that now she could think of herself. She could not let Jean go like this; he was so good and true; she would have given her life for the esteem of a nature like his,—she could not lose it, she could not!

"Jean!" she cried.

He did not pause.

"Jean!" she repeated, in a voice so faint and low that it was scarcely audible, yet with an appeal in its tone which he could not resist.

He turned and walked back. She had seated herself on a fallen tree-trunk; she was leaning

forward, her hands clasped over her knees, her head bent, her eyes raised to his with a look of child-like entreaty.

"You won't go like that!" she said softly. "You could not go like that!"

"What do you want, Gracieuse?" he asked. "Why did you call me back?"

"To say good-bye, Jean; to ask you to forgive me," she murmured.

"There is nothing to forgive," he answered; it is I who have to ask your pardon—"

"Never mind, Jean—I—I—"

Just when she had gained her point, the physical feminine weakness asserted itself; her features worked convulsively; she sank slowly back, and would have fallen had he not caught her in his arms. He held her close to his heart—uttering her name—speaking tender words—but merely such as he might have used to a sister.

"I am only a baby," she said, presently, with a quiet smile. "I thought you were angry with me; I could not bear to have you go like that."

He did not speak for a little; she sat leaning her head against his shoulder; he had loosened the pressure of his arms, but she laid her hands over his, twisting his fingers together in an absent fashion.

"One thing," he said, presently, and his voice was very quiet now, showing no sign of emotion save in the care he took to render it slow and his enunciation clear. "I did not follow you. I had gone out to walk; I supposed you in bed; I never saw you till I was near the château."

She did not even shiver, so determined was she to send him away freed from doubt.

"I could not tell why I went," she said, still twisting his fingers in that absent fashion, though she had raised herself and was sitting upright. "I am very capricious and excitable; you know that, Jean! I was vexed with myself for having refused to go to the ball, so I went to peep in at them. Then—then—"

"Well?" he asked, rather sternly.

"Ah, yes; I was trying to remember; you frighten me so when you are vexed, Jean!"

A ghost of a smile flitted over Jean Chegary's white lips, but he did not speak.

"Oh, then—then—what was it?"

"Then Monsieur de Vieuxville came out!"

As he uttered the words he half rose; she held him fast by the light pressure of her nervously working fingers.

"Yes," she said, and laughed — a little gaspingly, but she laughed. "He was so vexed; he scolds me whenever he likes. I have known him all my life, you must recollect; and he scolded me well for my imprudence—and—and—that's all, Jean."

His face was turned away; he left his hands passive in her clasp. There was a mingling of pity and trouble in his countenance, with a strange, fixed, obstinate determination under.

"You weren't really vexed, Jean?" she whispered. "You could not think—think—oh, Jean!"

"My God! Gracieuse, don't cut my heart out with such words!" he groaned. "Here—listen—will you go away?—no matter what trouble—no matter. Oh, Gracieuse! will you marry me?"

He did not look at her; she trembled and shook a little, but did not cease her nervous patting of his hands.

"I can't do that, Jean," she said, after a pause; "never ask me that again: only my father—remember my father!"

"I shall remember," he answered.

He withdrew his arms gently from about her; rose, stood before her; stooped to kiss

her forehead, then drew back as if some visible presence had come between him and her, and prevented it.

"Adieu, my cousin," he said.

"Adieu," she echoed.

He turned and hurried away through the recesses of the wood, never once looking back.

As Chegary was traversing a corner of the forest which stretched beyond the park, Honour Pemberton dashed up one of the bridle-paths as fast as Queen's speed could carry her. Jean had just time to spring aside. Honour drew rein as quickly as she could, heartily ashamed of her own reckless riding.

She had been indoors all day, shut in her room even from Céline's scrutiny or Mrs. Somers's wondering platitudes.

Toward sunset the confinement of the house and the tedium of her thoughts became unendurable. She ordered her horse, dispensed with Joseph's guardianship, and having no mind to take the high road, where she would be exposed to meeting people, set off through the park and forest.

"I beg your pardon, Doctor Jean!" she exclaimed. "I did not mean quite to exterminate you."

In the midst of his trouble he noticed how pale she was; even the pace at which she was riding had not brought any colour to her face. She noticed, too, the change in him; and they eyed one another closely and oddly, even while she uttered her laughing salutation, and he replied,—

"At least, it has given me an opportunity to bid you good-bye again, Madame."

"Ah," she said, "you are going away. I had forgotten that you told me it was to-day."

"To-day," he repeated; "I am on my road to the station."

"Your uncle will miss you sadly," she said; "and—and your cousin—"

"Will not miss me in the least, and you know it, Madame," he interrupted, as she made a pause. The instant the words were uttered he would have given his soul to recall them, but it was too late. "I beg your pardon," he added; "I spoke rudely."

Honour perceived the great effort it required on his part to preserve any appearance of self-control; she saw the pain which looked out of his honest brown eyes, and blanched his bronzed cheeks. She leaned forward in her saddle, stretched out her hand impulsively, saying,—

"I do not think anybody else would ever accuse you of that, Doctor Jean. I am sorry you have to go—to go like this! You and I have grown such good friends during these weeks, that I may say so much."

"I thank you, Madame," he answered, pressing his lips respectfully upon her gloved fingers.

"And—and—you know you have permitted me to talk freely to you. I am sure you will not think me impertinent—"

"I think you everything that is good, and noble, and womanly," he broke in. "I understand what you mean. I should only show myself a coward if I pretended that I did not! See here, Madame; it can all be told in a few words; I promised to tell you! I have nothing to stay for, so I am going away."

"I am so sorry—it sounds so poor; but you know it comes from my heart," she cried. "If there were anything I could do—if—"

"One thing, Madame; to keep my secret. I think it would kill that dear old man to learn it now."

"I am sure it would," she said; "and, Doctor Jean, we must remember how young she is—that time—"

Again she stopped short in her sentence.

The recollection of the previous night rushed up; she could see her thought reflected in his face.

"Adieu, Madame," he said; "I thank you for all your goodness to me. Adieu."

And Doctor Jean was gone.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MORNING CALL.

It must be a strange thing to sit face to face with an incurable disease—this was Léon de Marsan's portion. He might live for many years, perhaps to old age, but he could never be a healthy man, or have more than temporary freedom from pain. On the other hand, an acute malady, added to his chronic sufferings, might at any time send him beyond the reach of this inexplicable jumble which we call human existence. De Marsan used to tell himself, in his morbid, bitter way, that his two intimate companions in life were physical agony and mental torture; and that he had grown so used to both, he could not even fancy what the world would look like without their companionship.

Effie was fond of saying that her husband knew nothing about suffering, unless it might be a little physical pain now and then. Léon always listened in silence to this favourite

phrase; but though she did not, perhaps, know the whole truth, I think Effie was quite aware she lied in making the assertion.

De Marsan grew up under a shadow so black that he had no boyhood. In the beginning of his manly years he had borne a grief so terrible, that only the dews of eternity could wash its traces from his soul. But he never talked of those memories. In many ways singularly frank, he was in others strangely reticent. The dearest friend he ever possessed did not know Léon de Marsan thoroughly; nor would the verdict of any three of his acquaintance have agreed in regard to his character and disposition.

He felt with the strength of a man and the bitterness of a woman—an unfortunate mingling almost always confined to men who belong to the type which we call, in our nineteenth-century jargon, "the artistic temperament."

He was at work in his studio the day but one after Honour's ball. Whatever other faults he might possess, laziness did not rank among them. The illness must be severe which kept him away from his easel; nor did he even yield to the sense of disinclination and inability which haunts every painter or author at times. He sat diligently at his task, regard-

less of his frame of mind, and often reaped the reward of discovering afterward that he had done his best work at such seasons—poetical as it may seem to young aspirants for Art's favour to toil only when a responsive mood renders toil a pleasure. Effie came in, sweet and smiling, as if since the ball she had not quietly ignored her husband's existence, with a talent for provocation cultivated to a degree of perfection which, it is to be hoped, few human beings ever attain. Experience had taught De Marsan what so sudden a change in her manner as the present really meant. Either she had been at some trickery which she feared would come to his knowledge, or was bent on some course of conduct she knew would meet with his disapproval. Probably the latter; and she chose the amiable *rôle* as the surest way of goading him into speech which would afford her an excuse for acting in opposition to his wishes: he could not ask her to show respect for his opinions, when he failed to treat her with the consideration due from a husband to his wife—Effie's favourite and exceedingly convenient shibboleth.

"Are you too busy to drive out?" she asked, after a little. "I want to go and inquire if Monsieur Flandin's attack of gout is better; I

promised Mademoiselle Mathilde that I would do so very soon."

"I wish you would wait," Léon replied. "To tell you the truth, I would rather we did not go there till this engagement business is settled in one way or another. I am especially unwilling that either of us should have even the appearance of being mixed up with it."

"But since Madame de Chantal asked us as a particular favour to further the matter by every means possible," returned Effie, "I should have thought that when it costs no trouble you might be willing to oblige a neighbour and an old friend of your family."

She spoke with such apparent sincerity, that one would have needed to know her as thoroughly as Léon did to detect the tinge of mockery in her voice, but it did not escape his quick perception.

"Effie," he said, "do not meddle with that matter. I seldom ask a favour of you—will you oblige me in this?"

"Am I a child, that you cannot trust to my discretion and my common sense?" she asked, in her injured tone.

"It does not appear clear to me how I have brought a doubt of either into question," he said.

"Does it not? I think a more unprejudiced person would not be at a loss to see it clearly," retorted she.

He took up his palette again.

"Never mind," he muttered; "never mind."

"I did not come in to have a discussion," she said, in a different tone—her soft, commiserating voice, which he had learned positively to shudder at, knowing that it was sure to presage some especially annoying or cutting speech. "I see that you are not well; please let us leave alone any subjects which could possibly irritate you. If you allow yourself to get into one of your moods, you will not be able to work all the rest of the day."

"A loss of some hundreds of francs," replied he, drily.

"Of course you would misunderstand my meaning—I am accustomed to that," she said, with plaintive resignation.

"Suppose you answer my question," he said.

"Your question?" she repeated, in a voice of innocent wonder, and an apparent attempt at recollection in her face. "Ah!—you wanted me to put off going to the Flandins. We can go again the first day you have leisure. I promised little Mathilde faithfully to be there this morning."

"I asked you to do me a favour."

"But when I tell you that I will go with you just the same."

"Good God! Effie, one would suppose you were dealing with an idiot!"

"Oh me!" she sighed, "I wish I had not come in. You are rushing off into one of your fits of excitement over nothing."

He kept on with a pretence of work. Presently, when he could control his voice so as to speak moderately, he said,—

"All this, I conclude, means that you refuse to grant the favour I asked."

"You were speaking about some question," replied she, shrugging her shoulders.

"Yes; a tolerably plain one, I think. I asked you not to meddle in Arthur de Chantal's affairs—"

"If you could avoid melodrama!" she broke in.

"I asked it as a favour," he continued, steadily. "Will you promise me, Effie?"

"To promise would be to insult myself," she replied. "I never go against your wishes—you know that—so there can be no necessity to exact humiliating pledges."

He was silent; he felt it weak, unworthy, to

be either irritated or hurt, but he could not avoid both, though determined nothing she could say should exasperate him into the angry speeches which she always turned to such account.

"All this talk has nothing to do with my errand," she said, having waited to see if he meant to notice her tirade. "I merely came to ask if you would go with me to inquire after a sick neighbour."

"I cannot go to-day," he answered.

"You *will* not, I conclude you mean."

"I do so want to keep away from all those people for the present; I can only repeat that."

"Repetitions are such wearisome things!" murmured Effie.

"I am still more anxious to have you avoid even an appearance of interfering in any way," he continued, regardless of her interruptions; perfectly unmoved, too, so far as mastery over face and voice went.

"Where my personal conduct is concerned, I have no fear of finding any difficulty in rendering it exactly what it ought to be under the circumstances," returned Effie, coldly.

He did not speak. It was useless—worse than useless—to pursue the subject. Nothing

he could say would move her. He sat with his eyes fixed upon his picture; she walked slowly up and down the room for a few moments. She found that he would attempt no further persuasions, and for the moment she could not irritate him into uttering words which she might term tyrannical and unmanly.

"I always try to obey your wishes," she said at last, since it became apparent that he did not mean to break the silence; "I believe even you would do me the justice to admit that. But I cannot allow you to make us both appear rude by giving way to your caprices. I have too much regard for our standing among our neighbours—too much care for your reputation."

Still no answer. It was on his lips to beg her for God's sake to let his reputation alone, and think a little of his happiness. But of what avail? Bear the needle-pricks in silence; to cry out is unmanly!

So Effie, strong in her virtuous determination not to let her husband's whims interfere with their neighbours' esteem for him while she was able, in her far-sighted wisdom, to prevent it, drove away in admirable spirits toward the Château de Rollebois.

Mademoiselle Mathilde was so delighted to

see her that her eyelids assumed the pinkish hue so unpleasant to Arthur de Chantal; Effie felt at once flattered by this show of agitation and amused at the peculiar form in which it was displayed. It might be excusable, and, indeed, proper, for a young lady to blush, but any female creature who could not confine her blushes within their legitimate limits deserved condign punishment in the estimation of Madame de Marsan.

Monsieur Flandin was better—able to make his appearance, very red in the face, and very puffy about the eyes, his pompous stateliness somewhat injured by occasional twinges of pain in his gouty foot, which caused him to execute little grimaces, calculated rather to appeal to his visitor's sense of humour than her sympathies.

Effie set herself to work to charm the stock-broker, and succeeded, in spite of a certain prejudice which Madame de Chantal and her gossips had instilled into his mind. He was a man who prided himself on his firmness, believing it utterly impossible that his ideas or decisions could be affected by any human being. He shared the fate which usually befalls such a nature. There were few people about him who did not know his weaknesses,

and play upon them at will; but, as Monsieur Flandin remained always certain that he took his own way unmoved as Jove upon Olympus, there was no harm done.

Mathilde and her aunt were called out for a while by the arrival of some young lady-acquaintances, and Flandin was left at Madame de Marsan's mercy. She managed to bring up the matter of the engagement, but contrived, before the conversation ended, to convince him he had done it.

She spoke for her husband—not herself. Léon was so deeply interested in Arthur de Chantal. Of course, she would never have dreamed of opening her lips if Monsieur Flandin had not broached the subject. She was deeply touched by this sign of friendliness; she had conceived an affection for his charming daughter as strong as it was ardent; to her mind, there was nothing so interesting, even touching, as the contemplation of two young people with their whole future before them—a future which must depend so much upon the influence of those who were at present their natural directors. It was fortunate for Mademoiselle Mathilde that she had a father so wise, so just, so competent to secure her real happiness: all girls were not so lucky.

When she entered the room, no power could have induced the great capitalist to believe that he should take Madame de Marsan into his confidence, but he did it; and having begun to talk, he could not stop, positively making so clean a breast as to pronounce Madame de Chantal the most pig-headed old woman in Normandy. Effie sympathized with him, admired his discernment, flattered his huge vanity, talked of the advantages of the marriage on both sides, declaring that wealth was the real power in our day, and that therefore wealth and nobility ought to be united.

All the while she felt supremely virtuous in thus helping the cause of that "dear boy Arthur," experienced a glow of righteous indignation when she remembered how coarsely Léon misconceived her motives, and believed herself the most praiseworthy creature in the world as, under all her complex feelings, she yielded to a pleasant sadness at the idea of her own generosity in allowing "the chief among her devoted friends" to be given up to another woman.

She and Monsieur Flandin were left together for a long time, and Effie made admirable use of her opportunities. Monsieur showed her that he was to the full as anxious for the match

as the Vicomtesse could be, and the little difficulties which had arisen proceeded rather from his having been *froissé* by old Madame's pride than any other reason.

The more Flandin talked, the easier it became to open his heart to Effie; indeed, under the spell of her enchantments, he quite forgot that the ardent friendship which existed between them only dated from this morning. And Effie got at the secret which, ever since he had contemplated the possibility of a marriage between his daughter and the heir of the De Chantals, had lain *perdu*, away down in the depths of his soul, and he had struggled vainly to find means to bring it to the surface.

He desired, in some fashion, to engraft his name upon that of the family his child was to enter. How it could be done he did not exactly know; indeed, whether there were any means of arriving at this end seemed exceedingly doubtful; the merest gleam of a suspicion of his purpose had caused old Madame so to descend upon him in the overpowering might of her patrician grandeur (always affecting utter blindness as to his intentions) that he could not stand against her. All the same, Monsieur Flandin clung to his desire—his pet dream—which he had not revealed even to his

legal advisers, because, in his fatuity, he wished to have its maturing entirely the work of his own diplomatic talents.

This aspiration had been at the bottom of his disagreements with Madame de Chantal; had caused him to offer so many difficulties in regard to matters concerning which he did not care a straw; he had wanted to gain time.

How the longing he cherished made itself evident to Effie the little woman herself could not have told, but it did; and her quick feminine brain seized and took it thoroughly in with immense delight. She was not clumsy enough, of course, to allow him to perceive that he had betrayed his secret. Having contemplated the matter from end to end with the rapidity of lightning, and understood Monsieur Flandin's project as completely as if he had discussed it with her in all its bearings each day for the last three week, Effie spoke. She had just been talking of the vast importance of wealth—the glory of being a "new man."

"In bygone generations," she said, "the man of weight and genius carved out a dynasty by his sword; in our century he does it, like you, by the power of his mind, by his genius, his far-sightedness in financial schemes, and the like."

He took all in, as the most sensible man will the flattery of a woman, if she only discovers his pet weaknesses. Effie could have shrieked in ecstasy over the trash she talked, and wished that Gerard could be there to enjoy the scene with her.

When she had flattered and wheedled the pompous stockbroker till he was in a state of such glorification over his own greatness that Juno's pet peacock would have been a meek-minded bird compared to him, Effie observed in a meditative way,—

"And a name such as you have made yours ought not to be lost; merged as it will be, owing to your having no son, in the family which your daughter enters, which your wealth enriches, which in fact regains its greatness by the energy and power of your intellect."

Monsieur Flandin could only prance in his chair and snort wildly.

"Bless me," continued Effie, "I wonder you have not cared enough for the name you have rendered so potent to add it to that your daughter will assume. Why, there were Rohan-Chabots,—why not Chantal-Flandins?"

It fairly took her listener's breath away, bold as he was, to hear his darling scheme thus put into words; and he and Effie were in about an

equal state of ignorance in regard to the family who had linked their name with that of the savage old Breton race.

Effie laid her hand on the arm of his chair, and looked up in his face with her beseeching eyes, and went on to tell him of her admiration for his talents, till he positively shivered with pride and delight.

"You must have thought of this plan," she said; "I know I only caught the idea from you: women are receptive—they do not originate. Oh, it ought to be done! Chantal-Flandin! Does it not sound well?"

And then Flandin did open his heart, and before the conversation ended was conscious, vaguely, of thinking that this wonderful woman was almost fit to be his wife, and rather marvelled that Providence, in its wisdom, had not left her a widow.

He certainly had reason to respect her talents, for she pointed out a way that would smooth the difficulties he had not been able to attack. In case there should be two sons, let the younger be called Chantal-Flandin: the same stipulation to hold good in the case of an heiress; and she, in her turn, to bestow her maternal grandparent's patronymic upon her husband.

Flandin projected his soul into the future, and caught a beatific vision of those children, each owning an unmistakable Flandin nose—he prided himself on that organ. Of course there would be two sons—not to develope them would be an act of ingratitude on the part of his daughter which Monsieur would have declined to contemplate for an instant.

So interesting did the conversation prove that Monsieur twice dismissed Mathilde when she came back to claim her share of their guest's society. He and Effie parted sworn allies, and never, in the whole course of her life, had the mischievous creature performed a work which caused her more genuine satisfaction.

Mademoiselle Mathilde was so delighted at the conquest which Madame had made of her father, that she positively shed tears on that sympathetic lady's bosom; and Effie, while patting and fondling her, was wondering how anything feminine could allow herself to be moved to such an extreme without first ascertaining that it would be becoming. The state of poor Mathilde's nose and the colour of her eyelids were something so appalling that Effie felt she would rather commit the mysterious unpardonable sin, concerning which she

had great curiosity, than present herself to mortal notice in that guise.

She was in such good spirits that she drove over to return Madame de Chantal's visit, and, unluckily for the venerable dame, it was her "at home" day, and she could not deny herself to her tormentor. Madame chanced to be alone too, and Effie was so amiable and sweet, so utterly regardless of the icy front her hostess presented, that the poor old woman nearly burst a blood-vessel.

Effie hastened to tell her of her visit at Rollebois, and a portion of the conversation she had held with Monsieur Flandin.

"He spoke himself of the engagement," she said; "if he had not, I should scarcely have ventured to bring up the subject; but I was so happy to be able to do what you asked, dear Madame."

Madame could only gasp.

"I told him how confidential you had been with my husband and myself," continued Effie; "that you had begged us to do anything we could to further the matter you had so much at heart. He was very nice—I think him really charming! Upon my word, one almost felt that the engagement ought to be made a

double business; he looked quite handsome this morning."

And Madame lived through this impertinence; had to do more—return thanks for her visitor's kindness! She felt that, like Lady Macbeth, she had lived a day too long!

Effie had put her completely *hors de combat* by telling Flandin of what she had done. It was now utterly impossible for her to talk to the man against Madame de Marsan; he would remind her that it was she who had begged Madame to interest herself in the business. She could not say that she had spoken merely to open Monsieur de Marsan's eyes to the enormity of his wife's conduct. Such an explanation might prove fatal to Arthur's interests; she could only hold her tongue and allow Effie to triumph.

I think, though not an imaginative woman, that, while listening to her guest's flowery speeches, there rose in old Madame's mind some recollection of history—of ancient days, when, in a case similar to the present, a dame who wrote herself De Chantal *née* Montmorenci would have visited summary vengeance on the insolent creature, even to the offering of drugged wine, or allowing the portcullis to descend upon her unwary head as she left the

château, and either consummation have been called an accident, with no troublesome coroner's inquest to inquire unpleasantly into the affair.

But, alas! the portcullis had been melted into guns, or something else, as long ago as the Reign of Terror, and Madame, worn, dilapidated, and poor, was as weak to contend against her enemy as the castle to withstand a siege.

So Effie conquered in every way, and drove home, thinking what a noble woman she was—what a spiteful, wicked creature, Madame—what a coarse-minded wretch her own husband!

Effie had spent a happy morning.

## CHAPTER X.

### WHAT SHE FOUND.

Honour Pemberton had, of course, been allowed a little season of quiet after the fatigues of her ball. "Setting her house in order" was a matter rendered easy enough by the diligence and dexterity of her servants; but the setting her soul in order was a task which she could not relegate to another, and a difficult business she found it.

Two days had gone now, and she could no longer be left free to follow her own devices, though assuredly solitude had not been so pleasant to her that she would have felt inclined to repeat poetry over its charms. Still, bad as it was, she grumbled at the necessity of relinquishing it, and girded against the petty law of custom which rendered it requisite for her neighbours to come or send, with a pretty pretended solicitude, and for her to receive their visits or answer their messages with equal civility and pretence.

Even Aurora had not plagued her during these two days; she had recovered from her toothache, been seized with one of her rare manias for usefulness, and driven the domestic staff to the verge of frenzy by hopping about from room to room where they chanced to be busiest, issuing every species of contradictory direction, and hindering them in every possible way. She was especially interested in the welfare of the plate; a weighty matter, which Céline and Pierre would trust to no lesser hands than their own. In particular, the counting of the forks and spoons Aurora felt it her duty to superintend; and as she could no more count than she could spell Hebrew, the confusion she created was indescribable. Céline found her, at one time, with no less than six large spoons in her pocket, seven small ones in her reticule, and a fork in her back hair. She smashed one tray of china by sitting down on it when it had, for a moment, been left upon a chair; twice upset a small table, covered with breakable articles; caused such devastation, and so wearied the souls of Céline and Pierre, that the latter secretly proposed to his coadjutress to put the old woman into the cistern, head foremost, and fasten the lid securely above her. But one

thing kept Céline tolerably patient—she was sure there was something amiss with her beloved mistress; and though Aurora might break all the crockery in the house, and drive every servant as mad as herself, Céline would endure it, if by these means she could keep the old bird from tormenting Madame.

She was wrong, though; it would have done Honour good to exchange her private torments for any that Aurora could have devised. She was humiliated, fallen in her own esteem, for the first time in her life, and that is a very bitter hour to a proud woman like Honour.

This man had come nearer her heart than any other had ever succeeded in doing, and he was base and false. Either he had been amusing himself at her expense (she grew cold from head to foot when she remebered his kiss upon her hand), else from the first he had been playing a part—actuated by the thought of her money—meaning to win her that he might benefit thereby. She would not even let herself think that affection might have actuated him; she was degraded enough by the consciousness that she had been attracted toward him—the insult of his love was an idea she could not endure.

Yet what was she thinking? she asked herself this. Evil of a young girl? No, no, not that! She held Gracieuse innocent; she pitied and longed in some way to aid her. But what to do, or how to do it? Without meaning to betray himself, Dr. Jean's words had shown her that he was powerless to help Gracieuse. Yet this unconscious confession proved that she needed help. How could Honour approach her? She knew the girl well enough to know that, in spite of her gentleness and sweetness, she was spoiled and capricious, with a temper which would not submit to interference. She looked back and remembered how odd Gracieuse had, several times of late, appeared when they met; yes, as she traced events day by day, ever since the growth of her own intimacy with De Vieuxville. Had Gracieuse been jealous? Was this wild explosion on the night of the ball caused by a culmination of jealous wrath? —the only possible solution, but one which in itself comprised De Vieuxville's condemnation. To go to such an extreme, to forget or grow so reckless of being seen or overheard, Gracieuse must have possessed a right to be jealous, the right given by that man's having sought and won her love.

It seemed to Honour that she had thought enough to tire her brain for the rest of her life, but when the two days ended she was still helpless; she could neither aid Gracieuse nor remove from her own soul the humiliating consciousness that she cared for this man. She had not seen him; he possessed at least the prudence to hold himself bound by the same rules as the rest of her acquaintance, and kept aloof. Honour almost felt it mean, but as her final suspicions of him came back—certainties now—she recollected how in the beginning she had doubted even his business honesty.

In the wake of that recollection came the thought of her conversation with Monsieur Pellerin on the day before the ball. She had forgotten his explanations until now, but they came up with sudden force, and took a new meaning. In this matter, at least, she must arrive at a distinct understanding with her manager. While Pellerin was speaking, she had satisfied herself with the idea that De Vieuxville had secured contracts of which their Rouen rival possessed no knowledge. She could not do so now. She remembered Pellerin's positive statement that no similar contracts were at this time in the market.

Certain it was that Monsieur de Vieuxville had told her, or allowed her to believe, they were in possession of the contracts he had proposed to effect, and work was going on as if such were really the case.

At least it was her right to probe this matter to the bottom, even if his social sins were not her affair.

She went to the secrétaire in her boudoir to look for some letters, searched in a drawer she had not opened for weeks, and came upon the paper she had picked up the first night Monsieur de Vieuxville appeared at the house.

She unfolded the sheet without knowing what it was, glanced down the page of mingled figures and writing; both acquired a significance they had not possessed when she laid the document away, solely with the intention of restoring it to her manager, under the belief that it concerned private matters of his own.

They did not look now like matters personal to himself. Honour Pemberton stood for a few moments studying the paper, and very stern and dark her face grew as she did so.

Still holding the paper, she descended the stairs and entered the library. Near one of the windows was placed an old cabinet, in

which she had found all letters, bills, documents of every sort, which had been left by her uncle. She had already several times begun to examine these records, but had never done it thoroughly. She had on each occasion come upon papers which she knew her relative must have meant to destroy, but had forgotten in the suddenness of the malady that cut short his career. She sat down before the cabinet now, and there was no longer place for hesitation in her mind. She examined carefully every paper and letter, every old receipt, every scrap of writing in turn. She had already studied sundry of the memorandum books, in the hope of finding a way to account for the deficit of 30,000 francs in the items of money her relative had had lying by him, but found no explanation.

She went over these books again; she compared sundry items with the paper in De Vieuxville's hand. When Honour had finished her examination, there did not remain much doubt in her mind as to the business probity of the man she had trusted so implicitly. But she had not yet reached the end. When it is too late for any knowledge which Fate can offer to be of service to us poor worms of the earth, Fate likes to give the fullest information

possible, though when it could have served any purpose whatsoever, unless to save us from suffering, Fate would not be induced to give us the slightest clue toward finding out the truth.

Honour put by the nervous, morbid delicacy which had hitherto prevented her searching records which might lay bare personal secrets the dead man meant to die with him. She had reached a point where she ought to know the whole truth—a point where, if he could come back and speak, her uncle would be the first to condemn any shrinking on her part.

Never in her life had she done anything so painful, so hard; but she could not stop short in her task—it was as if some power extraneous to her will forced her on.

She found a manuscript volume which she had not before seen: portions of it were a regular diary; the latter part contained only brief paragraphs, sometimes mere fragmentary jottings-down of trifling matters, as if the habit of chronicling the round of daily life had been so fixed, that even the absorption of illness and pain was not engrossing enough to make him entirely relinquish it.

And Honour learned that her uncle had

loved Gracieuse Galais, and had asked her to be his wife! She laid down the book, and sat for a while wondering if by any possibility she could use this knowledge to bring the girl nearer—as a means to help her in this hour of need and suffering,—no matter what its cause—Honour would neither ask nor think: the need was there—if only she might help! Then another recollection came up. Oh, memories forced themselves upon her now with such force, that it seemed to her she must have been blind, dulled, idiotic, during all these weeks!

She recollected De Vieuxville's once asking her if she had found old letters or diaries belonging to her uncle. He said that, during his last illness, Mr. Stanhope in his intervals of reason talked a great deal about the possibility of having forgotten such records, and left strict injunctions that they were to be burned.

Honour remembered—what a wooden doll she must have been not to notice it at the time! —a strange anxiety in De Vieuxville's face and voice as he spoke, though he hurried away from the subject as if he had only mentioned it by chance, and the matter were not of sufficient importance to dwell upon.

She read on.

Before she ceased the perusal of those frag-

ments at the end of the book, she had gained further knowledge: she knew where the 30,000 francs had gone. The amount was named; then came several lines carefully blotted out; then there was written,—

"Given—must remember—G."

Given to Gracieuse Galais—he must remember that they had been so given, and destroy every trace of them in his private accounts. There was no possibility of mistake: notes of a previous conversation with the girl set the matter beyond a doubt. Gracieuse had received this money: what use had she made of it? Certainly her father had no suspicion of its having come into her hands.

So far Honour reached; then Céline, having knocked many times at the door, ambled into the room in an exasperatingly deprecating fashion, to remind her mistress that guests were certain to come to-day—might appear at any moment now—and Madame was not dressed.

Honour felt glad of any interruption which called her away from the wild, hopeless confusion of her thoughts.

"Thanks for remembering," she said, trying to smile.

"Madame looks tired to death. It is all

those tiresome papers," cried Céline, with a vengeful glance at the piles of manuscript.

Honour hastily shut and locked the cabinet: it seemed a sin to let any human creature stand within reach of Gracieuse's secret—the secret which was still so inexplicable a puzzle to Mrs. Pemberton herself.

"Come, Céline," she said, "make haste to improve my appearance; I must be a dreadful-looking object."

"All that business—business—I hate it!" grumbled Céline. "God be praised! La Touche has sent down the loveliest grey silk, with blue trimmings. Madame will look like an angel in that, in spite of those fiends of papers"; and Céline shook her fist at the offenders with such energy, that Honour laughed in spite of herself. "Oh, Madame may laugh," continued the waiting-woman, in an injured tone; "but the truth is, this *business* (nothing but italics could give an idea of the emphasis laid on the word) will wear her to the grave. I wish we had never come here! The ball was a little satisfaction, but Madame was so tired out in advance that even the ball fatigued her."

The close of the speech sent Honour upstairs in hot haste; the bare recollection of that night made her shiver.

Half-an-hour after she was ready for guests, and the first announced was Monsieur Pellerin. Honour sent Céline to see if Mrs. Somers was ready to go down. Céline found her attired in a white petticoat and a red head-dress, wildly assaulting the patient Norman who had wakened her suddenly from a surreptitious nap. She insisted that she was dressed, and had been dressed for a week, and that nobody had come near her during the whole time; and that she knew she was on board ship, wrecked —Honour lost, she the sole survivor, and nearly dead from exposure and famine. Céline and the Norman, between them, at last restored her to sanity—"stayed her with flagons, and comforted her with apples"; and in due time she was able to appear in the drawing-room as mild and inoffensive as usual.

In the mean time Honour had been entertaining Monsieur Pellerin. He did not pay a long visit, but he managed to say a great deal during its course. So far from attempting to presume on the fact of her having asked a favour on the night of the ball, or behaving as though he considered that gave him a claim to intimacy, he was more modest than she had ever seen him.

He talked about his business; apologized on

the score that his head was so full of it he could not help boring other people; spoke of hers too, and uttered sundry remarks, which a few days before would only have puzzled her, but they roused a graver feeling now.

An imperial photograph of her uncle was sitting on the table near Monsieur Pellerin. He looked at it for a moment, and said,—

"That was a man I liked much; he was *sympathique* to me." I respected him beyond all power of words to express. We were on the most friendly terms, but not so intimate as I could have wished. I was made to feel that some secret power was constantly at work to separate us: thank God, that did not prevent our having a good many pleasant hours together! And always, when I had the good fortune to be alone with him in his office, or he came to see me at mine, I knew he completely forgot the influence exerted to keep us aloof from each other."

It would have been sheer affectation to pretend to misunderstand the person alluded to, as exercising this malign control. Indeed, Honour was in no mood to attempt such pretence. She wished to know why Pellerin and De Vieuxville disliked each other. Also Monsieur Pellerin had before thrown out certain

insinuations against her manager; she was in a sufficiently determined mood this morning to learn if he had a basis for them, or was simply ill-natured,—in the former case he must give his reasons—in the latter, receive the lesson he would deserve.

"Do you mean that Monsieur de Vieuxville was the person who tried to keep you apart?" she asked.

"Since you ask me, Madame, I must answer, Yes. You know he does not like me—he makes no secret of his aversion; so it is only fair that I should speak outright. More than that, it is only fair to him to say that I dislike him as much as he possibly can me, and probably misjudge him as readily as we all do the people for whom we have an aversion."

Pellerin could appear the soul of frankness when he chose; indeed, it was not altogether acting, for his nature was a singular mixture of craft and boldness, and Bismarck himself was not a greater adept at deceiving people by telling the simple truth. He uttered these last words in a half-laughing, half-earnest way, which would have convinced anybody that at least he was not the sort of man ever voluntarily to hurt a person he disliked; he was too

free and outspoken for such suspicion to be possible.

"Monsieur de Vieuxville's relations with me are solely confined to business," Honour said; "his likes or dislikes are affairs apart—entirely personal to him, with which I have nothing to do."

"I beg your pardon—ought I not to have said—I mean," he stopped short, laughed, and added,—"is that to tell me it is my dislikes which are nothing to you?"

"No; I meant just what I said."

"Then perhaps I may hope the Marquis's aversion to me will not affect you."

"Not in the least."

Pellerin did not say a word, but his bow and glance were eloquent with thankfulness. Honour could not help thinking she had misjudged him. All De Vieuxville's fault! He really seemed not only well-bred, but he had tact to do and say the right thing, and that was a faculty denied to most men, whatever their birth.

"I should like to tell you something," he said, "which will show you that your relative had confidence in me. He once wanted a sum of money, and came to me for it. A mere business transaction, mind you—no favour; he gave ample security—a mortgage—"

"You mean, when he borrowed money for his factory?"

"Yes; De Vieuxville never knew it—would say it was not true—the transaction was not in my name; but I have papers which would show you I held the mortgage."

"I do not doubt your word, Monsieur Pellerin."

"And you can see by that your uncle did not dislike me! Ah, yes; rivals though we were in business, we had a friendship for each other! Kept apart as we were, he trusted me! Still your uncle had so great an opinion of the Marquis's judgment, that he positively stood a little in awe of him."

"And why did you two dislike each other?"

"I suppose nature at first; after that, he thought on several occasions I tried to overreach. I was perfectly frank; I said that I considered myself at liberty to try for contracts, though my rival might be trying—to outbid him too: Monsieur de Vieuxville thought that mean, and said so; your uncle did not agree in his opinion."

Put in this way, Pellerin's conduct certainly did not appear to a third person in an unfavourable light.

Honour sat lost in thought. Presently he added,—

"But I never said things against the Marquis—yes, I have sometimes, when I was angry—to your uncle and young Mayne; but I did not talk about his family or—I beg your pardon, I fear I am not behaving well! Besides, you can't be interested; only, as the chance offered, I could not keep from fighting my battle with you. I shall always be absurdly impulsive, I think."

"It happens there was no occasion," Honour said; "still you are right enough. I must tell you, though, that I do not think Monsieur de Vieuxville ever spoke ten words about you to me."

"Perhaps I am beneath notice," he replied, laughing again. "It is no matter: you asked why we disliked each other; I have said."

"No, you have only told me why he disliked you," returned Honour.

"Ah, and—and—perhaps I envy him because he was born a Marquis—perhaps. No, Madame, I dislike him because he is cold, calculating, heartless—lives for one object—to build up his family: a good object; but he would sacrifice the whole world to it—that is not right!"

"It is very possible you misjudge him," said Honour.

"I have no doubt; as I said a little while ago, one would need to be perfect not to misjudge the persons one dislikes."

He uttered the words with a little grimace of mock self-depreciation which made Honour laugh. He laughed too, then his face grew grave. Both were silent for a little, then he said, abruptly,—

"We used to think little Mademoiselle Galais would be your relative's heiress."

"Yes, I know," returned Honour, before she remembered what she was saying.

"I think she would have only—only—"

Pellerin stopped short. Honour was in no mood to-day to be tantalized.

"Continue," she said. "Only—"

"That he got an idea where the money would go. At the last he changed his mind in many things concerning that man he had trusted so implicitly. I *know* this! Perhaps I know too much. Luckily, I do not talk, and so am not dangerous. But your uncle's papers must have shown you that Mademoiselle Gracieuse received a— Ah, Madame, I forget! I was so anxious to establish for myself a claim upon your regard, by showing you that your relative liked and trusted me!"

"You mean he gave her a sum of money,"

Honour said, determined to have any further light possible thrown upon the matter, for Gracieuse's sake; if she could only arrive at the whole truth she might be able to help the girl, in spite of herself or another.

"He did; but her father did not know, nor did your uncle know what became of it."

"Who does?"

At this juncture Monsieur and Mademoiselle de Hauteville were announced. Pellerin rose to take leave. He bent toward Honour, and said, in a low tone,—

"Who does? I think Armand de Vieuxville could tell you."

He passed out of the room. Honour sank back breathless in her chair. It all came to her like a flash of light! De Vieuxville had once told her that, a few months previous, a windfall, in the way of a small legacy, had enabled him to repay a mortgage against some farms just on the eve of its foreclosure.

But Mademoiselle de Hauteville's formidable eyebrows loomed before her; the venerable spinster pecked at both cheeks in an amicable fashion; the shrill falsetto of Monsieur her brother was heard, like a strangled echo of Mademoiselle's deep bass tones, and brought Honour back to the exigencies of the moment.

Antoine Pellerin rode down the avenue laughing pleasantly to himself, so engrossed in thought that he did not perceive a pedestrian approaching from an opposite direction, till a familiar voice called,—

"You must have been at some infernal bit of mischief this morning, else you would not look so content."

Pellerin raised his head, and saw Gerard Mayne. He checked his horse, saying,—

"Ha, my little Gerard! Good day—good day! How goes it with thee?"

"Who the dickens gave you the right to *tutoyer* me?" asked Mayne.

"My friendship, my deep affection, impelled me, ungrateful boy!"

"Very well; all I can say is that I do not appreciate your affection and friendship showing themselves in that particular way."

"Cold-hearted son of Albion!" laughed Pellerin.

"You be blessed!" cried Mayne, with the whimsical mixture of fun and earnestness which was one of his characteristics.

"But what are you doing here on foot?" asked Pellerin, regardless of the doubtful-toned benediction.

"Don Juan cast a shoe, and I had to leave

him at Father Petiot's to repair the mischief."

"So!" observed Pellerin, meditatively. "See you; since I have the good fortune to meet you, come down this side-path. I have those papers to give you; I want you to look them over, and here we are liable to interruptions."

He turned his horse along a narrow road leading into the recesses of the park, rode on till the avenue was no longer visible, and Mayne followed. Pellerin took some papers from his pocket, and handed them to the other.

"The receipts would have been enough," he said, "but I thought you might like to have these."

"Considerate creature!" sneered Mayne, as he glanced over the documents. "As these are of no use to anybody, you give them up."

"Always a wrong-headed, hot-brained boy," sighed Pellerin.

"You be —"

"Thanks, little Gerard, but you have blessed me already; do not overwhelm me with benedictions."

"You have not told me what successful

deviltry made you look so happy when we met," said Mayne.

"It was, on the contrary, the consciousness of having performed a good action," Pellerin replied, quietly. "You do not believe it, I see! That speaks ill for your discernment of character! You conclude that, because I use sharp practice in my business, I must be bad-hearted. A mistake, young Gerard — a mistake."

"Well, well! What good deed were you perpetrating?"

"If I begin to tell, will you promise not to fly out like a maniac?"

"Yes; go on."

"You love Gracieuse Galais, and you are jealous of the Marquis de Vieuxville," said Pellerin, calmly.

"You go to the devil!" cried Mayne.

"So be it. I can finish my history when I meet you in his Majesty's dominions, only it will be rather late to do any good," returned Pellerin, with unruffled composure. "After all, I am a fool! Go your own way! Make love to *la petite*, if she will let you, or allow De Vieuxville to ruin her reputation as you please."

"Pellerin, I think you will never be content

till you have made me a murderer!" groaned the young man. "I wonder I don't cut your throat!"

"You had better cut De Vieuxville's, unless you have recovered from your sudden fancy for Mademoiselle."

"If he breathes a word against her, I will!"

"He will not, my son, but his behaviour will make others. You asked what I had been doing. Trying to open Madame Pemberton's eyes to the fact that she has to deal with the most deliberate, cold-blooded scoundrel in France! See here, Gerard; I told you what happened at the ball; it was right to tell you. Well, well, go your own way! Doubt me if you will, believe in me if you choose; it is all one to me. I have done what I can to open your eyes, to open Madame Pemberton's. If you will both remain blind till the crash comes, *tant pis pour vous, ce n'est plus mon affaire.*"

Before Mayne could answer, Pellerin rode swiftly away.

It was a full half-hour later before the young man entered Mrs. Pemberton's drawing-room, gay and *insouciant* as usual.

There were a number of guests assembled; among them Monsieur Flandin and his daughter, the former so overflowing with compliments,

that Mayne told Honour privately he was certain she had achieved a conquest of the ex-stockbroker's heart, an appalling announcement, which caused her to shiver in spite of its improbability.

Guests went and came. Presently Monsieur de Vieuxville was announced. Honour received him in a courteous fashion, which would prevent the possibility of any looker-on entertaining the suspicion that she had cause for displeasure with the new-comer; but he perceived the difference from the manner to which she had of late accustomed him.

There are men who feel a change in the moral atmosphere about them as quickly as animals do in the physical. De Vieuxville was one of these, but he betrayed no consciousness of the impending storm.

Mayne rose to go.

"I nearly forgot my commission," he said, approaching the hostess. "As my cousin could not come out to-day, she sent this note, and begged me to bring back an answer."

"Then I must be excused for opening it," replied Honour.

She read Effie's billet. It was to ask if a breakfast De Vieuxville had offered them was to take place on Saturday.

"The note concerns you, Monsieur," said Honour, turning toward that gentleman, and briefly explaining the contents of the epistle.

"Certainly, on Saturday, if that will suit you, Madame," he said.

She longed distinctly and emphatically to decline to set foot in the pavilion, then or ever, or any other place where she would be forced to become his guest; but such an explosion was impossible.

"As well as any day," she replied, carelessly.

While Mayne stood on the *perron*, lighting a cigar, De Vieuxville came out of the house. There was no possibility of their avoiding each other, and they passed down the avenue together. Mayne looked flushed and heated—was evidently ready for an outburst of some sort—but Monsieur de Vieuxville appeared completely unconscious. He uttered a few commonplaces as they walked on. Mayne replied as best he could. They reached the road along which the young man had ridden with Pellerin.

"I go this way. Allow me to wish you good day," De Vieuxville said, lifting his hat with formal politeness.

"Good day," echoed Mayne, returning his salute, and they parted.

The road led De Vieuxville to the pavilion. He walked slowly thither, entered his study, and sat down to think.

He had gone to the château because there were matters which he wished to discuss with Honour, forgetting that to-day he should find her surrounded by guests.

The moment her eyes met his, the moment her voice sounded in his ear, Armand de Vieuxville knew what had happened,—knew that Honour had seen Gracieuse the night of the ball, had caught the words addressed to him by the excited girl.

De Vieuxville settled upon this conviction, and prepared to face the consequences it involved. All his plans must be radically altered. While Mrs. Pemberton believed in him, it would have been easy enough to follow out the programme he had arranged, to tell her frankly that things were going wrong, that he believed they had a dishonest clerk in the office, that new telegrams had failed, secrets been divulged, and he, as yet, unable to detect the culprit.

But she would no longer accept his unsupported word, and trust implicitly to his counsels as she would have done a week before. She would inquire closely, want

proofs, perhaps make an examination into affairs such as she had never had the patience or inclination to attempt. From first to last his plan of operations must be changed. Yet he needed money, needed it without delay; but to have it he must offer satisfactory explanations, and, quick and clear as his brain was, these were difficult to find at this juncture.

He sat thinking — thinking! This fatal blunder might utterly ruin him—utterly! If he had only remained in the ball-room that accursed night, allowed Gracieuse to wander about the pleasaunce as long as she pleased; if she did things likely to compromise herself, it would not have been his fault! What a triple idiot he had been! what a consummate ass to care—to turn soft-hearted! Why had he not eaten his supper like a sensible man, instead of going out to trouble himself about a silly girl! But for that he would be safe, his schemes secure,—and now!

And he loved Honour Pemberton! Yes; he was not thinking of her wealth—he loved her! And he had lost, or terribly endangered, his hope of eventually winning her.

From first to last it was maddening—and the failure all his fault: he constantly went back to

that! If he had not gone out; if he had left that girl; that—

He stopped short in his meditations, and started up from his seat. He had caught sight of his own face in the mirror. Perhaps some terrible thought which had risen in his mind was reflected in his countenance, and to see it written there startled him, as if it had been the face of a stranger taking cognizance of what was passing in his soul.

## CHAPTER XI.

### IN THE PAVILION.

It was Saturday, and Honour very unwillingly prepared to go to the pavilion. Go she must; because to stay away, however plausible an excuse she might find, would be a sort of slight to De Marsan and his wife; and though she might not feel inclined to regard Monsieur de Vieuxville's feelings, while their business relations continued, she must show him apparent courtesy, if only to avoid—what Honour cordially detested—wonder and gossip among her friends.

The sight of the man had only increased her anger and bitterness, and it grew with every hour which intervened between his visit and the present morning. Since then events unconnected with him had overtaken her which disinclined her for anybody's society. But, troublesome as these matters were, bringing a heavy weight of care and anxiety, their importance had not been able to make her forget her wrath,

and worse, the humiliation to her pride, because she was aware that pain mingled with her anger.

Most women would have tried to deceive themselves; to tell their souls the pain arose out of the necessity of withdrawing esteem from a person they had respected; giving up a friendship which had grown sufficiently a habit for its loss to leave a void behind. But Honour's nature would not permit this paltering with truth; she was brutally honest with herself. She had been an idiot, and there should be no attempt to soothe either heart or pride by pretences or finding a false name for the emotions which disturbed her. She had cared for the man—she had gone near loving him—why even this was not the whole truth -she had loved him! It was gone, that brief dream!—the first she had ever known—so bright that its fading left the whole world darkened to her eyes; but it had existed. Her affection had died suddenly, with one terrible throe, under the conviction of his baseness, but she had loved him.

The love was killed, but the pain and humiliation remained, and she thought she could never recover her own self-esteem. What galled her most was to find that she regretted

her pretty vision as if she were a silly chit of a girl, instead of a woman going out of her youth with no possible excuse for her folly. She who had felt such confidence in her own common-sense; had believed that no weak romance, such as feebler women indulged, could ever disturb the stately composure of her soul; to have yielded her heart with the rapidity of a boarding-school Juliet—to what? A musical voice—a pair of handsome eyes—any and every ridiculous reason which in the case of others of her sex had moved her often to such comfortable vestal scorn. Why she had not even waited to know the man! she had loved him from the first,—been fascinated, passively allowed her heart to go out beneath his glance! Bah! it was too contemptible; she was sunk so low that she was not worth wasting even shame upon!

I think no human being ever endured so terrible a lashing from the tongue of an enemy as Honour bestowed upon herself. Perhaps she overdid the matter, and caused her heart to feel its hurt more keenly than it would had she treated it with a little consideration and reserve.

But the business of scarifying her soul, engrossing as it was, could not render her

oblivious of the fact that certain very prosaic troubles had come near her—she was likely to be straitened where money was concerned.

On the previous day she had received letters from America of a very disagreeable nature. A large portion of her income came from investments in a stock concern which had been considered as safe as the Bank of England or the American Government securities. A dishonest director had run away with something over a million of the company's money, and by a long course of fraudulent conduct had managed to leave them liable for debts to an almost equal amount. The association would right itself; nobody had any doubt of this; but, for at least eighteen months to come, not a penny of interest could she expect from that portion of her capital.

Honour had been spending a great deal of money during the last two years. She was fond of luxury, but not an extravagant woman; the sums had gone in her wonderful philanthropic schemes. She had been aiding schools in Rome, building churches in Colorado, besides the large drains already upon her purse from orphans she was educating, widows she was maintaining, Heaven knows what all.

And to make matters worse, this now great

sugar factory and refinery on her hands—the cultivation of the beet enormously extended, independent of the contracts with the neighbouring farmers for the root—the business in every way greatly enlarged—all these expenses besides the twenty thousand pounds she had advanced for taking up the mortgages with which her relative had burthened it.

Then she had her purely personal projects growing out of the new duties she had accepted—her schools for the workmen's children, her hospital, and divers other interests, which had swallowed up a good deal more money than she expected in the outset.

So, now Honour had to face the fact that she was likely to be sorely cramped and put to the wall. Her fortune was such, that her schemes—numerous as they were—had been reasonable enough, but naturally she had not counted upon the possibility of failure on the part of the American company.

Unless Monsieur de Vieuxville's plans began speedily to bring in a return, absolutely she should not know which way to look. If it were possible that the manager was playing as false a part in business-matters as he had done in other things, the sooner she knew it

the better, or the trouble that would arise therefrom, added to her present complications, might menace her with downright financial ruin.

Had the news from America come to her a week previous, De Vieuxville would have been the very person from whom she would have sought counsel; but now he had become an object of distrust, and, so far from seeking his advice, what she wanted was a certainty that he was not playing the villain.

In addition to her other cause for humiliation she had to tell herself that she had attempted work beyond her powers; that what she had called philanthropy was vanity; that in her arrogance she had believed herself capable of anything and everything, and had failed miserably. Altogether, Honour had passed eight-and-forty as uncomfortable hours as often come into human existence.

But for this morning she must put care and business aside, for the petty social necessities of the time.

Mrs. Somers was, of course, to make one of the breakfast-party; she never walked, so Honour had the pony-phaeton out, and they drove through the park to the picturesque little pavilion.

De Vieuxville and his visitors were standing outside as Honour drove up. She saw that he had increased the number by the presence of Monsieur de Hauteville and his strong-minded sister.

De Vieuxville came forward as the carriage stopped; uttered quiet greetings, helped the ladies to descend, and was as much at ease with Honour as with Mrs. Somers. Honour felt a hot thrill of indignation as she looked in his face. She would have liked to tell him then and there what she knew in regard to him — to startle him out of his arrogant stateliness (she went back to her original name for his manner), by repeating the whole story before his guests.

But this was a mere passing insanity—natural enough, however. She smiled sweetly upon him, for the benefit of those about; allowed him to take her hand; said just what was fitting and proper, and passed on to greet the rest of the party.

Effie de Marsan was the first to get possession of her—Effie, in her best looks and spirits, and a costume so exquisite that it moved even Mademoiselle de Hauteville's manly soul to admiration and a feeling akin to envy.

"I am the most uncivil wretch that ever

lived," cried Effie, kissing her; "but I could not come near you yesterday. Léon was ill," she added, in a whisper. Then, aloud,—"I thought you were going to be late. I was so delighted to think you would be pulled down from your pedestal of perfection—or, at least, pushed a little askew on it! I was offering Monsieur de Vieuxville any odds that you would be behind time."

"I hope he accepted them," replied Honour, laughing.

"No, he was very Jesuitical! I know you thought I should win—now own, Monsieur, that was the reason you would not bet."

But Honour could not hear his answer. De Marsan was greeting her warmly. Monsieur de Hauteville was paying her compliments, and his sister bestowing a cast-iron kiss upon her cheek, so she was fully occupied.

While the others talked, Effie continued her laughing conversation with their host. She had made up her mind to make one last effort to subdue him. She was quite willing he should love and marry Honour—always supposing Mayne had no chance—but she wished, if possible, to remove from her soul the consciousness that she had met one man who

plainly showed he did not consider her fascinating.

Poor Arthur de Chantal had been crazy to appear at the breakfast, but Effie did not wish him invited. It really was her duty to prove to Monsieur de Vieuxville that she was not insignificant, and might be dangerous even to him; and Arthur would be in the way.

After a little they all went in-doors. It was the first time Honour had ever set foot in the pavilion. It was a copy—on a smaller scale—of the Petit Trianon. The Chanoinesse who built it probably wanted, in her seasons of retreat, to soften her loneliness somewhat by being able to summon at will reminiscences of the courtly haunts whose pleasures the lightly setting vows of her worldly order did not prevent her sharing.

Monsieur de Vieuxville led the way up the marble staircase to the suite of apartments, furnished as they had been in the days of the beautiful Adelaide. Her full-length portrait hung in the *salon*—it caught Honour's eyes as she entered. She took a dislike to the picture at once, and was ready to believe all the tales which gossip had preserved in regard to the Chanoinesse, because the face so much resembled Monsieur de Vieuxville.

Effie wanted to see the whole suite of rooms without delay.

"We may never get another peep, Madame Pemberton," she said, "so we had better take advantage of this opportunity."

Honour gave a rather languid assent; it irked her to remember, when this party was proposed, how eager she had been to visit the place Monsieur de Vieuxville had for a number of years called his home.

The host offered his arm to Madame de Marsan; old De Hauteville and Aurora were too busy exchanging confidences in regard to neuralgic symptoms to join the others in their tour of inspection; so Honour walked on between Mademoiselle and De Marsan, and depended upon the spinster for information in regard to the various objects of interest which the apartments contained.

"I have not been here since just before the Marchioness's death," Mademoiselle said, in a low tone. "She begged her son to bring her here to die; she hated the château; no wonder, poor soul. Well, well—that is all over years ago, thank God!"

The old woman stopped for a moment and pretended to be examining some ornaments on a table; but both Honour and Léon noticed

a tremor in her stern voice, and exchanged a rapid glance of surprise; neither of them would have believed anything could betray the stony-faced spinster into a show of emotion.

Effie fully engrossed De Vieuxville's attention, to Honour's great content; every moment during the visit that he kept at a distance from her was a relief.

The rooms were quaint and interesting. There were presents to the Chanoinesse from Louis XV. and his three daughters of unpleasant nicknames; a spinette, upon which Marie Antoinette had often played; embroidery worked by the fair hands of the unfortunate Lamballe; a lock on one of the doors (and a bungling affair it was!) which Louis XVI. had fabricated and presented to the Chanoinesse as his gift. Scarcely an object but had its history, and the silken hangings and furniture coverings, though faded and worn, gave a picturesque fitness to the old rooms. It was like stepping a century back into the past to stand there. The fact that the apartments kept that peculiar look rooms do which are lived in, rendered the spell so complete, that one would hardly have been startled had the Chanoinesse herself appeared in her rich black robes, wearing her heavy gold crucifix.

But, in spite of her imagination and cultivated tastes, Honour was scarcely in a mood to appreciate the poetical associations of the place.

She forced herself, however, to listen and to talk, and none of the guests seemed to notice any change from her usual manner except Léon de Marsan; he had suffered too much and too long not to be very clear-sighted where anybody was concerned for whom he cared as much as he did for Honour.

"I think you have not recovered from the effects of ball-giving," he said to her, as they stood alone for a moment; Mademoiselle de Hauteville having moved on to ask De Vieux-ville some question in regard to dates where-with she was fond of burthening her mind.

"I think nothing will ever tempt me to give another," she answered. The least allusion to that night still stirred such a storm in her soul, that it was difficult to speak calmly. She became conscious of her misplaced energy, and hastened to add,—"I am tired still and very cross! Don't you find that fatigue always makes you misanthropic, and gives you a contempt for small pleasures equal to that of Diogenes?"

"I find human life a bore, and humanity a

beast!" returned he, with an energy that rivalled hers.

Then they both laughed; yet, as their eyes met, each comprehended the bitterness and trouble which irked the other; but this knowledge only rendered both more eager not to let their conversation stray beyond the frivolousness of common topics.

They were not forced for many moments to run such risk, the risk there always is of speaking out when one feels that one understands and is understood. Mademoiselle de Hauteville put her head in through the curtains, and bade them come and see the Chanoinesse's boudoir. In her eagerness she looked so like some malevolent old witch, with a power of being male or female at will, and as if for some purpose she had begun the transformation and stopped half-way, that in their present excited moods both had much ado not to laugh outright. Luckily they were able to restrain themselves; Mademoiselle still had her head between the draperies, gesticulating with true French eagerness; as urgent for them to follow as if she had secured the ghost of the Count d'Artois (who once, according to scandalous chronicles, paid the Chanoinesse a visit *en cachette*), and was afraid he might escape if they did not hasten.

They found Effie and De Vieuxville in the room. Mademoiselle was in a state of excitement about some object, and would not let their host explain its history, though she had demanded the narrative; she kept setting him straight, and as she had confused the relic with some other memento, her interposition rendered the chronicle very confusing.

The story and their inspection tour were cut short by the appearance of De Vieuxville's ancient servant, Laurent, arrayed in his holiday suit, which he would wear on great occasions in spite of everything his master could say. He had clothes enough provided of modern cut; but on an occasion Laurent elected to sport nothing but this special costume, which had been new when De Vieuxville's mother came a bride to the château.

"*Monsieur est servi!*" he called, in his cracked voice, oddly divided between the subserviency of a whole life and the querulousness of age.

"In a moment, Laurent," said the Marquis.

"No, Monsieur, now, *à l'instant*, if Monsieur pleases," cried Laurent. "There is a trout *en papillote;* if it waits a second it is ruined."

"There is no resisting that appeal," De

Vieuxville said, as everybody laughed at the stubborn old fellow's earnestness.

"And no human being, with a proper respect for his stomach, would be guilty of waiting," said De Marsan.

So they marched away to the dining-room, and Laurent rushed in haste, in hot haste after Mrs. Somers and De Hauteville, and drove them in before him like a couple of elderly sheep.

The breakfast, though simple, was exquisitely cooked and served, and De Vieuxville had some wines left from the remains of the once-famous château cellars, which could hardly be equalled.

There was a great deal of talking and laughing, yet, with the exception of Aurora and old De Hauteville, not a creature there but felt the whole business either a dreariness or a bore. It was a bore to Effie, because De Vieuxville, though pleasant and attentive, was no more affected by her witcheries than the statue of one of his ancestors which stood in a corner of the room, a full-length in marble, and Effie decided that so unimpressionable a wretch was utterly unworthy of her darling Honour, and win her he never should, if it was in human power to prevent the catastrophe.

The morning was a dreariness to cast-iron Mademoiselle, for the dearest friend she ever possessed had been De Vieuxville's mother, and this visit to the place where often she and Madame had sat when both were young, and life, even to the Marchioness, full of brightness and hope, where later she had seen her friend die, prematurely old and broken by care and trouble, was almost more than even the spinster's stern nerves could endure. She was vexed with herself for coming; emotion made her cross, as it often does elderly people: she snapped at De Vieuxville and everybody else, except Honour; she was so anxious Honour should marry her dead friend's son, that even in her excitement she was amiable to her; and felt downright diabolical inclinations toward her brother because he was eating his breakfast undisturbed and unruffled.

As for Honour, we know what her state of mind was, so it is easy to imagine her feelings. De Marsan, with his artistic temperament, was easily moved by surroundings. Not only the air of the place affected him by its associations of the past, but he unconsciously felt the influence of the others' moods, and this, added to the weight he carried at his heart in these days, rendered him either silent, or so

feverishly gay that his spirits were painful.

And the host himself—verily he was not reclining on a couch of roses. In addition to the business anxieties which beset him, every moment impressed more forcibly upon his mind the fact that he had lost all chance with Honour Pemberton. She smiled in his face, she paid him compliments, she was horribly courteous; but each word increased the conviction that he was a ruined man, so far as her esteem went. And he loved her—whatever he might be, he loved her!

Just because they all found it so difficult to be gay (I do not count Aurora and De Hautville, for they were too busy eating to talk or think), they prolonged the breakfast as if there were a tacit agreement among them that each was to suffer some heavy penalty at the hands of the others if the festivity were disturbed.

When the last item in the due course of the performance appeared, coffee served, a cigarette smoked by the men, and Honour began to hope she might get away, Effie suddenly said,—

"We must see the rest of the rooms, Monsieur de Vieuxville! We are determined to examine every nook and cranny, are we not, Honour?"

Effie did it just to exasperate their host. In spite of his civility she saw he was disturbed—society a drug—and she chose to punish him for her defeat.

Honour longed to express her indifference, but was afraid if she yielded in the least to her impulses she might say something which would give a suspicion of her changed feelings toward the Marquis, so she echoed Effie's determination with enthusiasm.

They all went this time, penetrating even to the Marquis's sleeping-apartments. A picture hung there which his mother had painted, and Mademoiselle de Hauteville wanted De Marsan to see it.

While Léon was pointing out the merits of the production, Effie, who never could listen when he talked, peered about the chamber, just from sheer idleness. On one side there were some hangings of green damask; she pushed these back and discovered a door.

"I have found the haunted chamber!" she cried. "Is one at liberty to peep in, Monsieur de Vieuxville?"

"Certainly," he replied, after a momentary hesitation. "It leads into what was the Chanoinesse's bed-room." The door was locked; he opened it, adding, "I would advise you not

to enter; I never use it, and it is sure to be very dusty."

"It connects with the little suite his mother occupied during her last illness," Mademoiselle de Hauteville whispered to Léon, unheard by any one else.

Everybody looked in, one after another. It was a dark old room; the furniture had once been rich and elegant, and a faded silk counterpane still covered the marvellously twisted four-post bed.

Mademoiselle de Hauteville's hoarse voice suddenly broke the silence which had somehow crept over the little group.

"It is time to go home, Hilaire," she said to her brother; "quite time! We have a long drive, and your cold is bad; come at once."

Little Monsieur fled instantly; he never disobeyed those tones. Aurora hurried after him; Mademoiselle's bass always startled her. The old maid followed, smiling grimly at this proof of her power, talking to De Marsan. Effie had again captured the Marquis—this time for the express purpose of saying sugary but disagreeable things as a punishment for his obduracy.

The consequence was that Honour found herself alone in the room, and nobody noticed that she had lingered. She was on her way

out; some impulse caused her to turn back and glance once more into the gloomy chamber, whose mingling of worldly luxury with objects which would have been better suited to a convent chapel than this haunt, had attracted her as an odd exponent of the character of the woman who had fitted it up. As her eyes became accustomed to the gloom, she perceived some shining object on the floor near the bed.

She went into the chamber, stooped, and picked up the glittering thing. It was a gold bracelet. Honour stared at it for an instant, then shut her eyes with a groan of horror, while every vestige of colour left her face. Several seconds elapsed before she could nerve herself to look again at the terrible tell-tale.

There was no possibility of a mistake. She held in her hand a bracelet which she had given Gracieuse Galais on her *fête*-day, composed of broad enamelled *plaques*, linked by tiny gold chains, with her own initials and Gracieuse's engraved upon the clasp.

She could hear the voices of her companions in the distance; could hear Effie striking chords on the ancient spinette, which emitted dolorous notes under her touch, as if in com-

plaint at thus being roused into utterance after its century of silence.

She stood powerless, forgetful of everything in the cold horror which dulled her very soul.

Effie and the Marquis were half-way down the stairs when the former said, "Why, where is Madame Pemberton?"

"I thought she had gone on with her cousin," De Vieuxville replied; "but she is not in the entrance-hall. How very rude she will think me! I must go back for her."

He hurried upstairs. Effie passed on.

De Vieuxville hastened through the *saolns*, reached his bed-room, perceived the door open into the chamber beyond. He looked in, and saw Honour standing there, the bracelet still grasped in her hand.

He did not start. He shuddered slowly from head to foot, like a man struck by a mortal chill. Her eyes were fixed upon his face. He returned her glance without shrinking, and said, quietly,—

"They sent me back for you, Madame."

She walked swiftly toward him, white as death, her eyes positively blazing with a sombre fire. She held out the bracelet. As she did so, she remembered that he had been present when she gave it to Gracieuse. She could

recollect, even at this moment, some laughing speech he had made as he took it in his hand to examine it

"Will you give this to its owner, or shall I?" she asked.

He was as pale as she; but he looked fixedly at her, with a strange wrath burning in his eyes. No shame, no care for the exposure, only an absolutely murderous anger in their depths.

"*I* will," he answered, in an unwavering voice.

"Take it, then!"

He extended his palm; she dropped the bracelet into it, and swept past him without another word or glance. She had almost gained the door leading into the *salon*, when he called,—

"Madame!"

She looked back over her shoulder, with a gesture such as she might have used to dismiss the vilest beggar whom she had befriended, and found stealing as a return for her charity.

"Don't try for any words," she said; "explanation is beyond even you."

He advanced into the chamber, looking at her still, his front bold and unabashed as ever,

the same concentrated wrath gleaming in his eyes.

"Madame," he answered, "if I had intended such, your manner would have checked it."

"None easy to find, I think," she said, in the same low, grating tone of contempt.

"Madame Pemberton will think what she sees fit," he replied, in a voice hard as steel.

Honour passed on through the rooms, and descended the stairs. He followed, not trying again to address her. When they reached the lawn, the rest of the party were seated in their carriages. Everybody called out adieus to Mrs. Pemberton. She replied pleasantly to each, and walked towards her own vehicle, while De Vieuxville was bidding farewell to his other guests.

They were gone. He approached Honour. She paused with her foot on the step of the low phaeton. Once more she looked back at him over her shoulder with the same expression of unutterable scorn she had flashed in his face when he entered the chamber; once more he returned it, a sort of wondering indignation in his eyes now, which roused her to such a pitch of anger that she determined not to wait

an instant, she would make an end then and there.

"Aurora," she said, "I wish to speak a moment to Monsieur. I will not detain you long."

Mrs. Somers was too much occupied in establishing comfortably in its basket a pretty white kitten which Laurent had given her, to care about the delay.

Honour moved back toward the house. Again he followed her, still silent.

They stood in a little reception-room off the entrance-hall,—she with her back toward the window, he opposite her, cold, stony, immovable; she so convulsed by varying emotions, among which a yearning pity for Gracieuse surged uppermost, that she absolutely could not articulate.

"I await Madame's commands," he said, in a voice as icy as his face.

His composure again roused her anger to such a height that she found voice and words easily enough.

"I should think you must know what they will be," she answered. "Monsieur de Vieuxville, I desire you to leave your place in my establishment."

He replied, without hesitation, without either

defiance or triumph in his tone—just a cold, hard utterance, such as one would fancy a statue might have if it could speak,—

"Unfortunately, Madame, my bargain with your late relative binds me here for five years."

"I never heard of that before," she said, trying to speak quietly.

"You have forgotten, Madame; else you did not read the papers I gave you the first day you visited the factory," returned he. "Your uncle had small faith in the talents of women for affairs. Perhaps you do not remember, either, that I have a per-centage on the business—a certain fixed claim, as a partial partner would have."

"The money shall be paid."

Such a course would involve inquiry into the working of the business. Her lawyers would be called in to arrange matters, everything be made public. His resolution was taken on the instant.

"Madame," he said, with grave courtesy, "I shall retain my place; it cannot be taken from me for five years."

"Then I will sell the factory," she cried, impetuously, unable longer to preserve the quiet she had been struggling to keep; "I

will sell the factory before the next week ends."

But even as she spoke she remembered the pecuniary troubles which menaced her, and knew that she dared not attempt to carry out her threat.

"The present would be a most unfavourable occasion," he said, calmly. "I have wished for some days to speak with you. For the moment, let us try to forget everything except that you are the proprietor and I the manager of the sugar works."

"So be it," she replied. "Then, perhaps you will explain to me why I was led to suppose the English contracts ours when they were in the hands of Monsieur Pellerin."

"To save you annoyance," he answered, with unshaken calmness.

She laughed bitterly.

"For the same good reason I suppose you have kept all the workmen, and continued planting the beet-root."

"Whenever Madame Pemberton chooses to go over the books, she will see that the £10,000 she advanced for those purposes are already recovered," he said. "As for explanations of the seeming mystery—"

"I want no explanations!" she interrupted,

too angry to be logical; "I will hear none! I repeat, since it is out of my power—if I find it *is* out of my power—to force you to leave your place, I will sell the factory to the first bidder."

"Even that resource is not at your command, Madame," he said, respectfully. "You oblige me to tell you that the land on which the buildings stand is only leased—it is mine—there is a special clause which forbids your selling or mortgaging without my consent."

She walked across the room, and walked back.

"Then I have only one thing to say!" she exclaimed, "and this you will consider final—at least you have no control over me in that!"

She stopped breathless. Her cheeks were scarlet now; she was so near the reaction which is certain to follow strong excitement in the breast of a woman, that it was only by a supreme effort of self-control she could keep back a burst of passionate tears.

"I am waiting for your final decision, Madame," he said, with pitiless coldness.

Honour felt as if the scalding drops which had threatened to overwhelm her dignity turned suddenly to sparks of fire.

"It is this!" cried she. "If I can neither dismiss you nor sell the works at my pleasure,

I have done with both. You may go your own way; you may ruin the business, if that suits your ends, but you shall never again degrade me into holding communication with you."

She walked past him, and left the house; entered her carriage, and was driven away.

He never moved till the sound of the wheels had died. Then he mounted the stairs very slowly, gained his bed-room, and locked the door behind him as he went in.

## CHAPTER XII.

### BETWEEN TWO WOMEN.

THE next day was Sunday. The nearest English church was at Rouen; but though a long drive there and back, Honour and Mrs. Somers always went. With her usual thoughtfulness for her relative's comfort, Honour had procured a modification of the old-fashioned posting-carriage, as easy as an arm-chair, so, with four horses ridden by postilions, they used, thanks to the delightful French roads, to make the journey without fatigue and in a surprisingly short space of time.

This morning they drove over as usual. Honour had rather an uneasy conscience during the service, on account of her wandering thoughts; and when it came to the sermon, she altogether gave up the contest, and let her fancies stray where they would; but for that I think her guardian angel could hardly have blamed her, as the pompous old clergyman was guilty of the enormity of preaching a full half-

hour, and his discourse had as many heads as a hydra, though without a hydra's consistency, for no two of the heads appeared to have the slightest connexion with the other or with the main body—one spat fire and brimstone, another drivelled weakly, and each contradicted everything its predecessors had announced as incontrovertible facts and heavenly truths.

But there were at least two persons in the sacred edifice perfectly content—one was the rector himself, and the second was Aurora, who slumbered sweetly in her corner from first to last, and declared afterward that she had never listened to a more improving sermon. So the clergyman could hardly be said to have made a failure, since he had so thoroughly satisfied two people.

They always went after service to breakfast at a comfortable hotel, where Joseph put up the horses to indulge them in a feed, while he and his mate were supposed to seek the consolations of their own special branch of the Catholic Church, though Honour thought it wise never to inquire how they spent their time, in spite of Aurora's assurances that such was her solemn duty.

"Joseph's nose is always red when we start

for home," said Aurora, "and it never is red on any other day! You needn't tell me going to church would have that effect; and you will have it on your conscience, that's all I can say."

"Joseph's nose?" Honour inquired, as Mrs. Somers to-day got off her stereotyped speech, while they were walking through the quaint old streets toward the hotel.

The old lady never appreciated a joke, and answered severely, though not with exactitude, —"I was speaking of his soul, and nothing else." And Honour, fretted and worried, was guilty of the enormity of a pun in her confusion.

"The *sole* thing with which I cannot meddle," said she.

"It is my opinion that you are asleep," quoth Aurora, not understanding the pun or Honour's laughter at the addled state of her own brains, and going as near the verge of irritability as she ever reached. "No; I shall not take your arm; I shall walk alone! I know we shall break our necks some day over this Papistical pavement! Eternity is not a matter to speak lightly about, and—Why how do you do, Monsieur Pellerin? I *am* surprised to see you: I never dreamed of it, I am sure."

All in the same tone and uttered in English, so that of his share in the address the gentleman understood little beyond the mention of his name. But Honour came out of her reflections to discover that Monsieur was standing before them, very elegant in attire, and voluble with expressions of delight at this unexpected meeting, which he had carefully planned in advance.

"You have just come from church, I suppose?" he said. "I wish I might venture to ask a great favour. The other day, Madame, you half promised that one of these Sundays you would honour me by accepting breakfast at my house—if you would permit me to beg you to choose to-day."

Honour had no wish to go, but a reason for refusing was not easy to find; and, indeed, Aurora cried out that it would be delightful, she chancing to have fallen into one of her irrepressible moods, though as a rule she never had opinions.

So they walked with Monsieur toward his dwelling. As they entered the stately old courtyard, Mrs. Somers stopped short to exclaim,—

"Joseph will never know where to find us, and we shall have to walk all the way to the château—Honour, I am surprised!"

"I shall let Joseph know where you are to be found," Monsieur said.

"And I am sure it is not proper," murmured Aurora; "quite sure."

But she had relapsed into English again, and the gentleman did not catch the words, which Honour allowed to pass unnoticed.

Monsieur Pellerin was very proud of his home, and had reason to be. He begged the ladies to be lenient in their judgment—it was only a miserable bachelor's abode—he could not even be certain the breakfast would prove eatable; but he could not resist giving himself this great pleasure, since destiny had done him the favour of meeting them—an impromptu breakfast by an unmarried man was a bold effort—and so forth. But Monsieur's cook was either clairvoyant and had projected his soul into the future, and foreseen this honour to the house, else he was in the habit of preparing a bounteous repast of a Sunday, to be in readiness for chance guests; because the breakfast, served almost immediately, was delicious.

Honour was too much occupied trying to keep her thoughts in order, to indulge in a suspicion that the whole business had been carefully planned on the part of their host. He made himself exceedingly agreeable, and

after breakfast Aurora fell asleep on the sofa, and Honour could not bear to waken her, so she and Monsieur conversed for a long time. Unimportant as the visit seemed to Mrs. Pemberton, it did not appear so in Pellerin's eyes. Setting aside the fact that he had gained an advance in their acquaintance, he learned two things which he considered of consequence. Honour mentioned that she should be obliged to go up to Paris for a few days, and he discovered, from questions she asked in regard to certain details in his business, that she was troubled about her own. He put this fact and her proposed journey together, got very near the truth, with his usual perspicacity, and rapidly formed a determination that if Madame was in any pecuniary difficulty, means should be found to turn it to his own advantage in one way or another.

It was sunset when they entered the little village of Vieuxville. They could have reached the château without passing through it; but Joseph had made the *détour* on his own responsibility, knowing that a *fête* was in progress.

The peasants were dancing in an open green space on the outskirts of the town, and a number of carriages were drawn up in front;

people had chosen this road for their evening drive, in order to watch the gaieties.

Joseph and his subordinate made such a cracking of whips, and brought the horses forward with such prancing and noise, that Honour felt a little annoyed at the commotion caused by their arrival.

She saw several acquaintances in the carriages: even old Mademoiselle de Hauteville was present, sitting up as erect in her ancient barouche as if she had been a bronze image of some dead-and-gone ancestress. Other people whom she knew had descended from their vehicles and were walking about; among these were the De Marsans, Mayne, Arthur de Chantal, and Mademoiselle Flandin, all of whom at once hurried up.

"I thought it was the Queen of Sheba at least!" cried Effie.

"Who had lost her way going home from visiting Solomon," added Mayne.

"I hope your Majesty is quite well!" called Léon.

And Arthur and Mathilde did their part by laughing; and Honour had to find her wits and good spirits, and proceed to talk nonsense and behave like a reasonable woman.

They would not hear of her driving on;

Aurora herself wished to see the dancing, though, as soon as Honour consented, she said,—

"It is Sunday; I *am* surprised! Mr. Mayne, please to help me out; I am cramped to that extent I feel as if my legs were corkscrews, and I know I shall walk in a circle."

So there was a merry, laughing group, with Honour for the centre, and into the midst of it walked Monsieur de Vieuxville, before he was aware, and found himself face to face with his employer. She returned his greetings with such elaborate courtesy and such frozen smiles, that he felt as if he had suddenly been stuck full of icy needles, as only a woman can make one feel.

"Oh, Monsieur de Vieuxville," cried Aurora, "why didn't you come to the breakfast? We were so surprised you were not there."

"Breakfast!" cried Effie. "Why, Honour, you said you had been respectably at church."

"We don't eat breakfast in our churches," cried Mrs. Somers, slightly misunderstanding, as usual. "It was at Monsieur Pellerin's; and I am sure he was surprised the Marquis did not come. Oh, I forgot you don't like to be called so."

Having fallen into a blundering mood, there

was no telling where she might end, so Honour hastened to explain the matter. On the whole, she was glad Aurora had spoken, for she saw a look of positive annoyance flit over De Vieuxville's face. He was displeased — perhaps alarmed—at the idea of her becoming friendly with his enemy: so much the better! She was feminine enough to find a satisfaction in his displeasure, even while she felt hot and angry at the idea of his presuming to disapprove of anything she might choose to do, or indeed to have any opinion whatever in regard to her conduct.

She took Monsieur de Marsan's arm, and the whole party moved away to look at the dancers. De Vieuxville had been planning an escape; but Aurora captured and held him fast, talking with unusual volubility, saying exactly the things she ought not, among them that she was sure Honour would be surprised if he went away—a remark which Honour overheard, and it caused her, for the first time in her life, to feel positively exasperated with the well-intentioned old robin.

More people joined the group. Monsieur Flandin had alighted from his carriage on seeing Honour, and came up to play the agreeable, suffering such pain in his efforts to induce his

gouty foot to behave as if it had never known an ailment, that Effie and Mayne were wickedly amused.

De Vieuxville did manage to get away at last. Mrs. Somers discovered she was thirsty. He went in search of a glass of water, but sent it back by a servant from the café, and appeared no more.

Effie noticed this disaffection. She said to Mayne,—

"I am sure there is a difficulty between the two! There is a chance now, that you would not lose if you had common sense."

He turned upon her, with an irritation he seldom betrayed; not even pretending to misunderstand, or trying to fence.

"My dear cousin," said he, "I leave your affairs alone; I warn you that you will do well to show me the same consideration."

"Why, Gerard!" she exclaimed, too much astonished to be offended, "I do believe you are cross."

"I shall be if you don't drop that business now and for ever," he replied; then began to laugh. "I've a new boot on, so I am as bad off as old Flandin with his gouty foot. By the way, I will wager what you please he means to make up to the widow."

"Delicious!" said Effie.

It occurred to her that it would be a beautiful thing for the elderly gentleman to make an idiot of himself. Nothing could more annoy his daughter, Madame de Chantal, and the whole troop of harpies. She vowed, on the instant, that if her talents could aid in the work, they should be magnanimously employed.

She dared not flirt with Arthur in the present company, though it required considerable ingenuity to keep him quiet, and he vexed Léon's soul by looking passionate reproach at her out of his handsome eyes while talking to Mathilde. Having nothing to occupy her, Effie, after a little, took possession of Monsieur Flandin when some new claimant for conversation robbed him of the courted widow. Effie at once proceeded to charm him, by talking first of Arthur's evident infatuation for Mathilde (she noticed with pleasure that the girl's eyelids were pinker than usual), and then of Honour Pemberton, expressing her belief—and she knew the lady as few people did—that if ever the widow married again, her choice would not fall upon a young man. The very way in which Flandin bridled and beamed convinced her of the correctness of

Mayne's suspicion, and she was so anxious to punish her enemies, that she could scarcely restrain her hints within the limits of prudence.

But "there is no fool like an old one," and Monsieur was so completely an example of the adage, that he only considered her remarks chance observations which she let fall, in her heedless feminine fashion, without a suspicion that they could affect him personally.

The recollection that it was already past dinner-time, and everybody's dinner several miles away, at length caused the knot of notables to disperse, and leave the peasants to their amusements unrestrained by the influence of patrician eyes.

Old Mademoiselle de Hauteville gave the signal for departure by sending a footman in search of her brother, who had joined Honour's party. The spinster was in what Mayne called one of her "cranky" moods, and would not leave her carriage, and snubbed everybody who ventured to approach—even Honour, who was a great favourite on ordinary occasions. Monsieur stood too much in awe of his sister to tarry an instant. He hurried back to the barouche. It drove off almost before he could take his seat, and he was unmercifully wigged

all the way home by the ancient damsel, and not allowed to eat any sweet dish at dinner—a downright cruelty, for the little man's soul adored sugared *plats*. It chanced that this special saint's day was one of Mademoiselle's anniversaries, full of painful memories, which hurt even after twenty-five years of bearing; and her way of enduring the pain was to be excessively cross.

The other people exchanged adieus and drove in their respective directions. Aurora went fast to sleep, and Honour had the bliss of her own society, which she appreciated so far as to reflect that any other human being's would be worse; but she got no further in her appreciation.

As the carriage passed Monsieur Galais's house, she caught a glimpse through the trees of the old gentleman and his daughter sitting in a summer-house near the gates. The sight reminded her of the fact that she had of late sorely neglected the gentle invalid. It brought up another thought, full of trouble and bitterness.

What was it her duty to do in regard to Gracieuse? She could not put from her mind the discovery of the previous day. It was not in human nature either to thrust aside the sus-

picions which rose, too, though she loathed herself for the inability. Her heart ached for the girl. She was at least certain that it held no tinge of harshness where she was concerned. It seemed a positive crime to remain passive; yet what could be done? Appeal to Monsieur de Vieuxville to have mercy? As well appeal to a wolf when it held a lamb in its claws. And to Gracieuse, what could she say? If she opened her lips, she must tell what she knew. The explanation of itself would be an insult; yet, if the child were innocent, led thoughtlessly on by love for that bad man—if there were still time to aid, and she, Honour, never so much as stretched out her hand to help—an unpardonable sin must lie at her door.

The peculiar circumstances of Mrs. Pemberton's life of course made her regard the matter as any unmarried woman would have done; but the most innocent girl could not have been ignorant enough to pass over the finding the bracelet where it was found, without knowing that Gracieuse, in going to the place, had been guilty of an indiscretion which must blast her character if discovered. Then, too, the visit, taken in connexion with what had happened on the night of the ball, was conclusive evidence that the girl had been

driven to the verge of frenzy by jealousy or some other trouble growing out of her love.

On Tuesday Honour meant to go up to Paris. She wished the opinion of a lawyer in regard to the tenability of the position Monsieur de Vieuxville had announced as his, and to which he meant evidently to cling. But there was a more disagreeable business than this connected with her journey. She required money. Monsieur de Vieuxville's explanations had shown her that no return for the sums she had invested in the sugar factory could at present be hoped for. She had so thoroughly exhausted her resources that, in addition to the amounts she could lay hand upon, she needed at least a hundred thousand francs to go through the next eighteen months, by which time the American difficulties would be arranged—as she must live so that no suspicion of her annoyances could arise, and, what was more important, carry on the numerous schemes she had undertaken. There was not a plan among the whole which could be relinquished, or its execution delayed, without bringing calamity upon others; and Honour could not permit this. The money she must have, at any cost. Having decided

upon this, she recovered her courage, and was ready to act.

Monday came: Honour received no communication from Monsieur de Vieuxville. Either he was afraid to meet her, else he proposed to remain passive—simply to defy her. She seized upon this latter reason for his silence, and the conclusion only increased her bitter anger.

In the afternoon she went to visit Monsieur Galais. She told herself that it would be unkind to let more time pass without going to see him, yet she dreaded the interview. He would talk to her of his disappointment in regard to Jean Chegary, if she saw him alone, and what was she to answer? She dreaded still more to meet Gracieuse. Her heart was full of sympathy. She longed to help the girl; yet the task was so difficult, that, after all her reflection, she was as far as ever from finding any way of interference which did not hold the risk of doing harm instead of good.

She drove up to the quiet old house in the late afternoon. Manette offered no explanations, and was so voluble with inquiries after Madame's health, and dropped so many curtseys in dizzying succession, that Honour followed her into the *salon* without so much as

asking if her master were at home. When she had the lady fairly seated, Manette informed her that Monsieur was absent.

"He never goes from home," Manette said, "but just to-day he is gone. Monsieur de Marsan came, and persuaded him to go to Rouen, to see a picture or something. I shall tell Mademoiselle that Madame is here."

"Perhaps she is busy. I will not disturb her," Honour said, quickly, fairly shrinking from the interview she had sought.

"Busy? She will be delighted! It is her duty, as well as her pleasure, to be!" cried Manette, shrilly; and away she trotted on her *sabots*, calling through halls and up staircases,—"Ma'mselle, Ma'mselle! come, come quickly!"

Honour was kept waiting for some moments. She had begun to hope either that Gracieuse was out, or did not mean to see her.

Suddenly the door opened, and Mademoiselle Galais appeared, her unusual pallor rendered the more striking by her black dress—a garb she seldom wore, as she had a true Southern love of bright colours. She carried herself very erect, her head thrown back, a certain defiance visible in every line of her face.

"You came to see my father, Madame,"

she said, as she entered; "I am sorry he is out."

Honour had risen, and was holding out her hand, trying to look and speak as usual.

"I came to see you also, my dear," she said.

"You are very good," returned Gracieuse.

She was close to Honour: she could no longer be oblivious of the hand still outstretched; she touched it with the tips of her fingers; as she did so, her loose sleeve fell back, and showed the bracelet Honour had picked up in the pavilion two days before.

She felt herself turn red, then pale; looked guiltily up, and saw Gracieuse's black eyes fixed upon her, flashing with a sullen, sombre fire. Yet, in spite of the haughty, defiant expression which lay like a veil across its beauty, the face looked so young, so almost child-like, that Honour could no more feel anger than she could harbour suspicion that the girl was wicked or bad.

She could not decide upon any course of conduct; she just yielded to the impulse of her heart, laid her hand on Gracieuse's arm, saying,—

"My dear child, what has come between us? Why do you speak so; why do you look at me like that?"

For an instant the girl's lip quivered; the beautiful colour rushed into her cheeks and faded; a faint dew gathered over her eyes. But the emotion faded quickly as it came; her face turned so sullen and hard that Honour had an odd feeling as if years had passed since their last meeting—years which had changed the gay, laughing creature into a bitter, desperate woman.

"Gracieuse, speak to me!" she cried.

"I am very happy to see Madame—it was kind of her to come. I am sorry my father is from home," returned Gracieuse, in a slow, monotonous tone. "Pray be seated. How warm it is to-day! but not too warm for the season. I hope Madame Somers is well."

"Quite well, thanks," Honour answered, sitting down, and trying to speak quietly. "I am going to Paris to-morrow for a few days, so I thought I would have the pleasure of seeing you and your father before I go."

"My father will be disappointed," Gracieuse said; then her eyes lighted with a strange eagerness, and she added,—"I suppose you are going for the rest of the summer."

"No; only for a few days."

a cieuse seated herself in a chair opposite

her guest, her face harder and sterner than before.

"Change is very pleasant; you rich people are fortunate to be able to indulge in it at will," she said.

A sudden idea seized Honour—if she could persuade the girl to accompany her! Having Gracieuse to herself for a few days, she might be able to break down this wall of suspicion and dislike, and, by winning her confidence, find the way to help her—for that she stood in some dismal strait Honour was more than ever convinced.

"I wish you would go with me," she said. "Mrs. Somers hates journeys, and I shall be quite alone except my servants,—do go with me."

"I should be most happy to be of service to Madame, but I cannot leave my father," Gracieuse replied, seeming to consider the invitation given only because she might prove of use.

"I am sure you would enjoy the journey," Honour continued, disregarding words and manner. "Your father could get on very well for two or three days with that faithful Manette,—do say yes."

"I can't go!" cried Gracieuse, sharply—

"I can't go." Then she tried to control herself, and added more quietly, "I never leave papa—please do not ask me. I do not mean to be rude—I—"

"My dear child, I only thought to give you and myself a pleasure," Honour said gently; "we will not speak of it, since it distresses you."

She looked at Gracieuse with her eyes full of tender sympathy, which few human beings could have resisted; but Gracieuse turned away, and busied herself arranging some scattered spools of thread which lay on the table.

There was a brief silence, which Honour did not know how to break. Presently she said,—

"You must tell your father how sorry I am to have missed him."

Gracieuse rose at once, as if she considered this a sign the interview was over.

"I will tell him," she replied; "he will regret his absence."

Honour rose; she could do nothing else. She meant to go: she was just holding out her hand, baffled, discouraged; before she knew it, she was exclaiming,—

"Gracieuse, don't send me away like this. Oh, believe that I am your friend—that I would do anything in the world to help you!"

"I need no help," the girl said, coldly; "papa is much better—able to attend to his duties. I trust Madame has no cause for dissatisfaction."

"Very great," returned Honour, rather sternly; "but with you alone."

"Ah," cried Gracieuse, angrily, "with my conduct no human being shall meddle!"

"I did not mean that," Honour said, resolutely clinging to the shreds of her sorely-tried patience; "I meant that I complain of your manner to me to-day. I thought we were friends—you promised to be—so I have a right to be surprised and hurt."

Gracieuse tried to speak, but could not. She sat down again, not as if she wished to prolong the conversation, but as though she could no longer stand.

"Believe me, dear, I am your friend," Honour continued, "and as such I must be courageous enough to say what is in my mind. You are very young yet—I understand the world better than you—I—Oh, Gracieuse! tell me what it all means—I will believe you—I see you have been told that I know—"

"Know what?" interrupted Gracieuse.

Honour pointed to the bracelet.

"You gave it to me—take it back!" cried

the girl, unclasping the trinket from her arm and flinging it upon the table. "Did you come here to insult me? Because you are *grande dame*, and I a poor girl, do you think you may do so with impunity? You do not know me, Madame! Your friendship? I refuse it! Your help? I do not want it! If I were dying, I would not accept life at your hands! There, it is all said now—we understand each other."

"Ah, no," replied Honour, sadly; "you misunderstand me terribly, and I can hardly feel you are the dear, sweet Gracieuse I have known."

Again that wild emotion swept over the girl's face,—the yearning for sympathy, the longing for companionship in the gloom of her secret; but she forced it back.

"You thought you could lecture and advise me," she said; "you came to patronize and direct me!"

She seemed not alone uttering words from anger, but trying to exasperate her visitor into departure.

"Not that," Honour said, firmly; "yet somewhat my conscience compels me to say. Had another—an enemy—found this bracelet—you are not the man's wife."

"You might as well tell me at once that I

am his mistress, and be done, as say what you do in that tone," Gracieuse broke in.

Honour was suddenly angry, though scarcely aware of it herself; she said coldly,—

"This is strange language from the lips of a young girl."

"Stranger yours, Madame," flashed Gracieuse, "from a great lady to an unprotected girl. I deny your right to question—to suspect—to think! I do not interfere with you—go your way, and let me go mine."

Honour's anger passed as quickly as it came. She had only pity in her soul for the unhappy child; pity as profound as her loathing was intense of the man who had brought the youthful heart to this strait.

Her visit proved that she was powerless to aid Gracieuse; more than that, she seemed to have done harm by her coming. Not merely had the girl some secret which she guarded jealously, but she harboured in her mind an active personal animosity toward her guest—Honour could not help feeling this—which put any possibility of aid or counsel out of the question.

And yet she could not bear to go—to leave Gracieuse alone in her suffering—for every womanly instinct told Honour that she was

suffering horribly. Before her quick rush of thought ended she heard the girl's voice again.

"I think there is nothing more to say, Madame! Understand, once for all, that I am a woman too; strong as you, proud as you; that I hold your pretended sympathy an insult —your insinuations a disgrace to your sex; and now I have done."

"Oh, Gracieuse! If your father—"

"Let my father alone!" she broke in. "My father shall not be murdered to gratify your wicked resolution! Don't you dare to come between him and me!"

"Gracieuse!"

"Not a word more—I will not hear it! Henceforth I enter no place that calls you its owner; do you show the same forbearance toward me. You will not go? Then I shall leave you. Adieu."

She hurried from the room; Honour sat so paralyzed with astonishment and pain that for some moments she could not stir. She roused herself at length, and left the house.

That evening she received a little package; when she opened it, the bracelet which she had given Gracieuse fell upon the floor.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### "A FRIEND IN NEED."

Honour went the next day to Paris, taking Céline and one of the men-servants with her. She would much have preferred entire freedom, even from the watchfulness of her faithful maid—a vigilance arising from devotion, not curiosity—but just because she had a secret to guard, she was afraid of giving her journey the slightest appearance of mystery, or room for her neighbours to marvel at any show of "American freedom," by presuming to attempt the perils of a less than four hours' journey without the body-guard which, according to their creed, ought always to accompany a young widow in her position.

Aurora was quite content with Honour's vague explanations that "business" called her away; settled it in her own mind, Heaven knows how, that her cousin had just bought or sold property somewhere to an enormous amount, and told people so, perfectly convinced

that she was stating the truth. She felt only too thankful not to be obliged to go herself, and even in the agitation of bidding Honour adieu, was reflecting that she could devour sweetmeats and drink strong tea to an unlimited extent—a purpose which she carried out so resolutely that she gave herself an indigestion for the rest of the summer.

In one way, these money troubles were a relief to Honour; they gave a reason for the gloom which oppressed her, and so afforded a little rest to that wounded pride, whose complaints were harder to bear than any other pain which could befall her.

Luckily it was so late in the season that she ran little risk of meeting any acquaintances and being dragged into gaieties for which she had no inclination. She wanted first to consult a lawyer, in whose opinion she had entire confidence. De Vieuxville's explanation of the terms on which they stood had taken her completely by surprise: she could not believe it anything but defiance and bravado on his part. But when she came to consult her relative's letters, she perceived that he had told the truth, and only wondered how she could have been stupid enough to overlook the fact in the beginning. Had she understood, she told her-

self that nothing would have induced her to meddle with the sugar factory; it was unheard-of and ridiculous to be shackled by a provision of the sort.

She hoped the lawyer might be able to find some means of compelling the manager to relinquish his post; or, if not that, she proposed to make him the medium of buying off this man who had become an incubus. She would hold no personal communication with De Vieuxville: whatever form the transaction might assume, it should be conducted by her legal adviser.

But it did not require a long consultation with the lawyer to prove that her worst fears were realized; there was no way in which she could get free. Monsieur Besselére knew De Vieuxville, and irritated Honour by expressing a little surprise at such desire on her part. She left him rather abruptly, after stipulating that he should at least endeavour to persuade the manager to hear arguments—that meant money arguments. Again Monsieur Besselére showed a gleam of wonder that she had not essayed this herself, instead of coming up to Paris to claim his services; such matters were always best arranged without the interference of a third party.

"In this case they cannot be," Honour replied, curtly; and then she left the lawyer with an abruptness which caused the old bachelor secretly to smile at her feminine want of self-control. He was something of a misogynist, and liked any exhibition of impulse or temper which could fortify him in his favourite theory as to the mental inferiority of women when compared with the opposite sex.

Honour would have found it difficult to give her real reasons. She said the man was personally disagreeable to her, but Monsieur Besselére only seemed amused at her regarding that as a just cause for disturbing business relations. She could neither tell him that De Vieuxville had wounded her pride—she would not say her heart now, even to herself—that she suspected him of a plan to win her hand for the sake of her wealth; nor could she reveal the blacker suspicion that he was behaving like a villain where Gracieuse Galais was concerned. The lawyer would only have repeated a question he asked in the commencement—"Are you aware of mismanagement in the business?" She had been forced to reply in the negative; she could not think it right to tell him of the contract failure, since she had had no real explanation of De Vieuxville as to his unac-

countable action in the matter, and he had declared the money replaced.

So Honour went away and devoted herself to a still more unpleasant task—that of trying to raise the money she needed. She had at first intended to consult Monsieur Besselére in regard to this, but she remembered it would be foreign to his province, and his advice valueless. This last thought arose when he irritated her by smiling at her opinion that personal antipathy was a reason for wishing to discharge a manager who understood his duties and performed them conscientiously.

So Honour set about that dreariest work human nature can be called upon to perform, or rather discovered that she did not in the least know how to set about it. After getting in such a rage with her own stupidity that she was ready to cry, she went in search of an *agent de change* of her acquaintance—an honourable man, and an obliging one into the bargain. Of course she did not find him—he had gone out of town, and she had to wait till the next day. She worried herself almost into a fever before she succeeded in gaining an interview, and it proved terribly unsatisfactory.

Just then, money was nearly impossible to

obtain on any terms; in her ignorance, Honour did not know, what many of us have learned, that such is always the case when one's search after evil takes the form of requiring a supply of its root. The *agent* would willingly have obliged her himself, being a victim of Honour's, but this was out of the question, owing to the pressure upon him at the time. He would think the matter over, and try to find some one who could accommodate her—a difficult thing, because he had no mind to put her in the hands of professional money-lenders, and she candidly confessed that she desired to keep the whole affair a secret. She was right there, he thought. For this reason, he advised her not to propose a mortgage upon the sugar factory; if she did, a person would be sent to inspect the Works, and suspicion might easily be roused.

What did he say to her offering American securities? Hum, hum! At this present juncture American securities were looking down—in fact, had their republican heads very much bowed indeed—though, of course, certain to rise soon. The best Honour owned, too, were the investments in the company at present under a cloud, and so, for the next year, nearly valueless.

Houses in New York—coal-mines in Penn-

sylvania? Hum, hum! as doubtful as before The trouble would consist in the verification of their worth—it might require weeks for that. But the *agent* would do his best; Madame should hear from him in the course of a few days.

He might as well have said years, for any comfort his promise brought to the impatient woman, forced, for the first time in her life, to face a pecuniary need.

Honour got away from his promises, his compliments, and his admiring glances, more profoundly irritated than she had been with the sarcastic-eyed lawyer, and went back to her hotel. The money she must have. As for waiting, that was out of the question; the anxiety would turn her grey, and cause her brain to soften.

The next day passed, and each hour increased Honour's feeling of helplessness. She abused her sex in general, and herself in particular, with a bitterness which a disappointed suitor could not have exceeded. She had reached a stage of despondency where any hope was difficult to grasp. She imagined all sorts of terrible catastrophes, even to seeing herself unable to pay for the orphans' education, or pawning her jewels, and divers other

unpleasantnesses, which could not possibly arrive. Evening came, and into the midst of her gloomy meditation walked Monsieur Pellerin — at least his card was brought— and she gave permission for its owner to follow, rather to avoid further solitude than because she wished to see him or any of his race.

But, before he appeared, a sudden thought struck her. He had done her relative a moneyed favour; had held his peace; arranged the matter so delicately that even De Vieuxville did not know of it. If she should boldly ask the same kindness in her own behalf? He was in the room; no time left to argue the question in her mind. There he was, pleasant and amiable, rather handsome, too, bowing over her hand, and uttering well-chosen words of greeting, mingled with excuses for venturing to trouble her.

"I did not know that you were in Paris," she said.

"Oh, yes; if you remember, I told you on Sunday that I was obliged to come," he replied, deprecatingly. "Indeed, I thought you gave me permission to call, else I should not have intruded upon you, as I suppose you are greatly occupied."

"I am very glad to see you," Honour said, anxious to make amends for her inadvertent speech. "The truth is, I have been so full of business these last days, that I forget everything."

"You are looking tired," he observed, in a tone nicely divided between friendly interest and respect. "This weather is too warm for business, except to a case-hardened worker like myself. Then, too, you are more fortunate than I, in having such intelligent subordinates as Monsieur Galais and your manager to attend to matters for you."

"Unfortunately, I had to attend to this affair myself," she said.

"Then, for me to say what I was near doing would be an impertinence," returned he. "I should have been glad to put my services at your disposal, to save you trouble or fatigue. But, of course, in a matter where Monsieur de Vieuxville could not aid, I—"

He finished his sentence with a bow that was quite eloquent. The very mention of her manager's name roused Honour to a pitch of desperation.

"I am by no means sure that you could not assist me, if you felt inclined," she said, speaking the words quickly, lest a repulsion

one side of her head felt against opening the matter, should prevent their being uttered if she hesitated a second.

"You may be certain that at least the inclination will not be wanting," he answered, composedly, though his heart beat like a hammer against his ribs. He had been right in his theory—she did need money! Pray tell me what the matter is," he continued, in a warmer tone. "I assure you, Madame, that if there were no other reason, the fact of your being my old friend's relative would make me eager to be of use to you."

"Very well, I will tell you," she said, rather defiantly—the defiance intended for that part of her mental anatomy which, for some cause unknown to her, did not approve of this frankness. "You once did my uncle a favour; I am in need of the same service! I want a hundred and fifty thousand francs for a year! There, I have told you bluntly enough."

She laughed nervously as she finished her sentence, which had come out in a very jerky way, much as a poor dentist would extract a three-pronged tooth.

"If you wanted double that sum, there ought to be no difficulty in your getting it," he replied.

"I certainly have found a great deal," she answered. "I offered any interest—any—"

"Madame, if you will permit me, I shall be most happy to lend what you require," he said, as quietly as if it had been a hundred francs, though, after all her anxieties, the sum loomed very large in Honour's eyes, in spite of the favours wherewith Fortune had hitherto crowned her life. "Please consider the matter settled; the amount will be at your disposal any moment you desire it. I am a plain, blunt man, and I cannot make fine speeches; but I am very glad it is in my power to do what you want, and I feel honoured by your asking me."

He said it well, and looked well while saying it, which was a good deal. Honour stretched out her hand; tears of relief filled her eyes.

"I thank you," she said. "I had worried till I was quite nervous."

"I told you the weather was too warm for business," returned he, smiling; "especially if it involves anxiety."

Honour smiled too, rather tremulously. Then she remembered her conversation with the *agent*, and added, hastily,—

"About the security? I am told that just

now American securities are not favourably looked upon."

"I should like to say what I did in the other case—an I O U is security enough for me," replied Pellerin; "but I suppose it would be a rudeness on my part to say that to you?"

"No, no!" cried Honour. "I appreciate your kindness. I cannot thank you enough; but of course that would be impossible."

"Naturally, from your point of view," he answered. "The affair shall be a strictly business one! However, I do not perceive the necessity of going so far as America for securities."

"I have no European property except the sugar factory," she said.

"And that is very valuable," he replied. "I understand. You preferred to give some other security. In case of dealing with a money-lender you would be right, but I know the property; there will be no need of examination or question."

"Then you would take a mortgage on the Works?"

"Most certainly. But there is one thing which, perhaps, you have not thought of—you will require Monsieur de Vieuxville's sanction."

Honour was so angry that she forgot her last gleam of prudence.

"I ask *him!*" she exclaimed. "Never!"

In an instant she regretted the words; but it was too late; they were spoken. Pellerin took advantage of them.

"Your frankness permits me to say that I felt certain last Sunday you were displeased with the gentleman," he said. "But, Madame, it is no favour you ask! In case he should refuse, it would be reason enough for your declining to retain him in your service."

"It seems I cannot discharge him."

"Pardon; if he became a clog, opposed your interests, you could; though you might be forced to make it a legal matter in order to do so."

"And I would," she said, and stopped. Once more her inward monitor warned her that she was losing sight of prudence, and even common sense. She must control herself.

"You choose to mortgage the factory!" he went on; "you ask no favour of your manager—you state your determination. However, I fancy he will make no opposition! Still, I would advise the same precaution taken in your uncle's case—that my name should not

appear—but in every way that will be better now."

Honour fully appreciated the delicacy which prompted him to want the matter arranged so that no suspicion could be roused of her having applied to him. She tried again to express her thanks; he would not permit her to finish.

"It is very pleasant," he said, laughing; "but I must not accept what is not my due. If you choose to take the money, and pay it back again at your convenience, then I will say it is a friendly loan, which might merit thanks."

"Oh, no, no!"

"Of course you will not! Then, since you give me ample security, it is a mere business transaction; you owe me no more thanks than if I were a Jew money-lender, with a dirty coat and a long beard, ready to seize the most usurious rate of interest possible."

He was trying to jest, in order to make her forget all her troubles; he was very kind—she liked him.

"But you ought to have a large interest," she said; "it is a great sum to draw out of your business. Wait; let me finish. I thank you for your kindness, but I must pay you at

the same rate I should have to in the case of another. I was told it would be heavy."

"I suppose it would," he replied, hesitatingly; "but I cannot accept—"

However, here she would not listen, and he finally allowed himself to be persuaded, though much against his will.

"I will do this," he said; "the man who ostensibly arranges the affair for you shall set the rate; I will not even ask what it is to be."

"Upon your word?"

"Upon my word! But you must not either. I cannot have usury on my soul, even to satisfy your scruples, Madame," he said, laughing again. "The business will be quickly settled. The moment Monsieur de Vieuxville—"

"Oh, I had forgotten! I must have him written to."

"Do you not know he is here?" asked Pellerin, in a tone of surprise.

"In Paris?" she cried.

"I saw him in the street to-day; he came yesterday. It is odd—I mean, I supposed of course you knew—but with that I have nothing to do! He is here! The simplest way of arranging the affair, if you will allow me to suggest—"

"Pray do; I am new at this business," she

said, with an impatience directed against Fate for forcing her to such extremities, though all the while she was wondering what could have brought De Vieuxville to Paris. Was he watching her? Had he some plan of his own to work out? But Monsieur Pellerin was speaking again.

"The man who will appear in the transaction—a Monsieur Vaudal, an honest, worthy fellow—will go to your manager, tell him he proposes to lend you money, get the sanction, and by to-morrow noon the whole thing will be arranged."

"Suppose — suppose Monsieur de Vieuxville—"

The thought which rose in her mind so increased her angry agitation that she was unable to finish her sentence.

"Refuses?" added Pellerin. "Madame, if he should, then the case I imagined becomes a reality! He wilfully hinders you in your business. I believe it would afford you an opportunity to rid yourself of him."

Honour started half out of her chair. Her impulse was to declare that if she could bring the man to that pass she would couch her demand in such terms that he would be certain to refuse; but she got her reason back in time

to check the words. Monsieur Pellerin waited till she sank into her seat again, and showed that she did not mean to speak; then he continued,—

"Have no fear, Madame; your manager will not refuse; he understands too thoroughly his own interests and the extent of his power." He began talking of other matters for a few moments, then rose to go. "Please consider the affair settled," he said.

The idea was so full of comfort to Honour that she forgot everything else.

"I wish I could thank you," she faltered.

"Tut, tut!" said Monsieur Pellerin. "I beg your pardon! You see how brusque I am. You are very tired; I wish you good night. I trust that now it will be really and truly a good one."

"It will, thanks to you," she replied.

"Wasted!" returned he, with a cheery laugh. "I am only a Jew usurer, eager for my bond, like that unpleasant person your Shakspeare describes. At what hour will it be convenient for you to receive my agent? Shall we say half-past twelve?"

"If you please," she said, suddenly turning so weary and faint after the reaction from her

days and nights of intolerable anxiety that she could scarcely speak.

He looked down at her with a glance of respectful sympathy.

"Would you think me impertinent if I asked a favour of you?" he said.

"I should be so glad if you would," she answered, trying to smile. "It is granted in advance."

"Then the moment I am gone, please get to bed and to sleep, and forget there is such a tyrant in the world as anxiety. Do you promise?"

"Yes," she said, holding out her hand.

He bowed over the slender fingers, and went away. Honour was only too glad to fulfil her promise, put by thought, and get to bed with all possible despatch. Once there, she slept the deep, dreamless sleep of intense mental and bodily fatigue.

The next morning the person whom Monsieur Pellerin had told her to expect appeared with commendable punctuality—a plain, sensible-looking business hack, without a shred of fancy or imagination to render his prosaic existence distasteful or unquiet.

The man's first words showed Honour that the matter was arranged. She had been work-

ing herself into a frenzy over the possibility of refusal, or at least annoying hesitation on Monsieur de Vieuxville's part. She had vowed that in either case she would at once take measures to discover if Pellerin's theory was correct, and, if it proved so, would make an end of her connexion with the manager, even if the attempt necessitated a lawsuit and consequent public exposure.

She admitted to her conscience that these years of freedom and power must have developed in her an arrogance from which she had believed herself free, since the idea of any person possessing the slightest right of restraint in any fashion irked her so bitterly. She tried a little to think it was because the power lay in the hands of this special man; but she knew that was not altogether true. She felt that her plans had lost their interest since she discovered there was the least flaw in her absolute sovereignty, and had the grace to be ashamed, though she repaid herself for this humility by being more angry than ever with De Vieuxville.

The matter was arranged in a very few moments. Honour signed certain papers, after Monsieur Vaudal had laboriously read them aloud—laboriously, because he had no voice to

spare. She was to pay a high rate of interest, but she did not care about that. The injunctions in regard to the foreclosing of the mortgage were very stringent in case of any failure of payments, but she did not even notice this. Céline answered perfectly as a witness to her mistress's signature, and was too much accustomed to serve in such capacity to give a single thought to the business.

The papers were signed, and Monsieur Vaudal placed in her hands a cheque upon a well-known Paris house, or rather a draft from them to her order.

"Monsieur Pellerin thought Madame might prefer it in that way," the little man said.

Another evidence of Pellerin's thoughtfulness, for which Honour was grateful. Then the gentleman himself appeared.

"I meant to have got here earlier," he said, "but was detained."

He asked Vaudal to show him the document, shook his head over the rate of interest, sat down and sighed.

"Oh, Vaudal, Vaudal!"

Honour was glad he had arrived too late to interfere, as she was certain he would have done, in spite of his promise. After the business man had departed, they sat talking

for some time. Pellerin was to return that evening to Rouen.

"Have you any commands?" he asked; "though I suppose you will be going back yourself very soon."

"No," Honour said. "I have had a letter from a friend near Fontainebleau, begging for a visit. I shall go to her, and stop several days."

Mrs. Somers had sent lengthy epistles; everything was going well at home, and Honour was not unwilling to defer her return.

After Monsieur Pellerin had taken his leave, she received a visit from Monsieur Besselére. He soon made evident his reasons for coming.

"I have been commissioned by Monsieur de Vieuxville to see you," he said.

"I heard that he was here, though he has not done me the honour to call," Honour said, with a lack of generosity of which she was ashamed, though she could not repress the words. She knew that he did not venture to present himself.

"He seems to fear that you are displeased with him," the lawyer said. "I fancy he thought it better to employ me. He wished me to give you this paper."

Honour took the folded sheet he held out,

opened and read it,—a few legally written lines, in which Monsieur de Vieuxville renounced the right in any way to interfere in the future with Madame Pemberton's freedom to mortgage or sell the sugar factory.

Honour's first impulse was to tear the page, and say she would accept no favour at his hands, but she restrained herself.

"If Monsieur has also commissioned you to offer me his resignation, I shall feel that he has done everything in his power—" she stopped abruptly; she had come near, adding "to atone," but those were words of doubtful meaning, which she did not choose to speak.

"He has not done that," the lawyer answered; "though I think he would gladly, did he not feel sure your business must suffer by such action on his part."

"I could have spared him any consideration or care where my affairs are concerned," Honour said, frigidly.

"He stays, because he conceives it his duty —and so do I," said the lawyer, rather reprovingly.

The colour deepened in Honour's cheeks.

"And I keep him because you assure me I cannot help myself—you may tell him so if you please," returned she.

The lawyer only bowed; he had known Honour for several years; he was a man so eminent in his profession that his social position placed him on an equality with his clients. He liked her, but he was displeased with her just now, for he thought her unjust. He had heard De Vieuxville's version of the affair.

Presently he said, "What Monsieur de Vieuxville hopes is, that by the end of the year he will have got your business into such shape that another can carry it on as well as he: the instant this is possible he will resign."

"The sooner his praiseworthy efforts meet with success, the better I shall be pleased," said Honour. "Now see here, Monsieur Besselére" —more and more aggravated by his manner— "you and I are old friends: we have often quarrelled and made it up."

"And I dare say we shall do so many times more," he interrupted, smiling now.

"But I'll not have you looking black at me, because I do not like your paragon—I don't like him, and that is the end."

"I never said I thought him a paragon; I have known him a long while, but not intimately. I believe he is an honourable man; I do not think it worthy a woman of your brains o give way to caprices—and your dislike for

him seems to come under that head. You see I am as plain-spoken as ever!"

She could not tell him the truth; she preferred that he should think her unjust and whimsical.

"He has explained to me how the failure happened in regard to the contracts," continued Monsieur Besselére.

"I never spoke of them!" cried Honour, indignantly.

"But De Vieuxville did. The telegram was mislaid, and so arrived too late"; and he told her, in a few words, what had happened.

"But he has gone on as if he had received the contracts," said she.

"Some other advantageous sales supplied their place. My dear lady, when you go home, take the trouble to study your accounts, and you will find everything correct. I scold you, but I am not indifferent to your interests! I believe Monsieur de Vieuxville is the best manager you could have; you do not yet fully understand the business; a new man brought in now, no matter how faithful, might muddle things terribly."

"What brought him to Paris?" she asked.

"A telegram from your humble servant. I saw you wished to get rid of him; I wanted

to arrange the thing if I could. But he is right to stay; he will not resign until the business has paid up all the expenses of the new refinery, and the machinery which has been purchased. As the original idea was his, and your relative would never have undertaken it except from his advice, his honour is concerned in the success of the scheme."

Mrs. Pemberton repeated the word "honour," under her breath, with bitter scorn, but returned no audible answer.

"I assure you," he added, "you may go home perfectly satisfied and content. You know me well enough to be sure I would not say this lightly."

"I am sorry I ever had anything to do with the factory—I wish I had leased it," cried she, with a petulance of which she was ashamed before she had ended the words. "But that is childish—downright silly! What an idiot you will think me! I have begun, and shall go on!—other people must not suffer for my fickleness."

He was very kind to her after this confession, and they conversed freely for some time. She told him that she had been forced to raise money, and the reasons which impelled her thereto, and he uttered no reproaches because

she had taken such multitudinous schemes on her hands, nor was there any question as to the quarter from whence she had received assistance.

When he was gone, she gladly put business aside, and prepared for her visit. Her friend's house was very pleasant; she singularly tired. There were no other guests, and she enjoyed the quiet. She was so unwilling to face the annoyances awaiting her at home—her trouble for Gracieuse—her dislike to meeting De Vieuxville—that she allowed herself to be persuaded into remaining; so, instead of making an absence of three days, ten elapsed before she went back to Normandy.

END OF VOL. II.

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